













# GANDHI AND KASTURBA

THE STORY OF THEIR LIFE

*by*

GANPAT RAI

WITH A FOREWORD BY

SHRIMATI RAMESHWRI NEHRU

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With love and regard

to

my father and mother who are no more.

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## FOREWORD

Page	A LIFE SKETCH hardly ever does justice to anyone.
... 5	In some cases it presents an exaggerated picture, in
... 9	others it fails to unveil the hidden beauties of a great
... 11	personality. Kasturba belongs to the latter class.
.. 21	She is a difficult subject for a historian. Many have
.. 29	written about her and in future still more will do so.
.. 38	But I am doubtful whether it is ever possible fully to
.. 52	reveal the innermost depths of that simple, humble,
.. 60	unassuming, self-denying and shy Ba who was the
.. 68	personification of forbearance, toleration and love.
. 74	In the following pages the writer has tried with some
.. 83	success to present to the reader the story of her
. 97	beautiful life.
. 102	I often met her. Living in Gandhiji's Ashram as I
. 107	often did, I came into close contact with her. The
. 112	picture of Kasturba in her little hut in Sewagram ever
. 125	neat and tidy, dressed in spotless white <i>khadi</i> , working
	at her spinning wheel, or reading <i>Ramayan</i> or receiv-
	ing friends and relatives who constantly poured in
	to have her <i>darshan</i> , is still before my mind's eyes.
	Sewagram without Ba would look so empty. Who
	can fill the void which her passing away must have
	created in the life of the Sewagram Ashram ?
	I am a great admirer of Ba, for I value the virtues
	of the spirit above everything else. Ba did not
	possess the qualities of being the heroine of a drama
	nor was she a brilliant writer or speaker who could
	influence thousands by the magic of her words. Hers
	was a subdued humble roll of following Gandhiji for
	better or for worse and of giving life and strength to

to understand it. It was enough for her that the movement was Gandhiji's whom she followed like Sita in all his assiduous wanderings in search of truth and freedom. She followed him in jail not once or twice but many times. She followed him in his voluntary poverty, she shared with him the hardships of a life of self-suffering and strict discipline. As long as she was physically strong to serve, she served him like a true *Rishi Patni* and did it with the greatest of joy. With what care she prepared Gandhiji's frugal meals for him. How carefully she peeled and sliced the fruits that he ate, how humbly and lovingly she brought them to his presence in wooden and brass utensils which vied with silver in their sparkling cleanliness. The milk she brought, the hot water she gave were of a temperature exactly suiting Gandhiji's tastes. I saw her doing all these things and I thought in those little deeds of her lay her greatness. Verily she was the living example of the Hindu ideal wife who merged her personality into that of her husband's.

And yet, she was a woman of great will power. She could not have done all that she did, if she was not strong willed. There is Gandhiji's testimony to show that she possessed a strong will and had her own ideas about things which in early life Gandhiji found difficult to counteract. But as she grew older she decided to subjugate herself to Gandhiji's will and she did it with the greatest grace and good will.

And in doing that she served not only Gandhiji but the whole of India, for Gandhiji is India. She took part in all the nation's movements, and suffered for them. She served and suffered for India quietly

as no other woman did. She was serving and suffering to the last breath for she drew her last breath in the captivity of a British prison.

She was beautiful and she was graceful and she was great. She lived and she died for India. For her great qualities, for her great services, for her great idealism and strength of purpose, she will ever be remembered most gratefully by posterity. Kasturba is dead but Kasturba lives for ever. She was a mother to us, the whole of India, and her memory will ever be honoured and respected as such. Let us all try to deserve that mother, to follow her and to be worthy of her.

RAMESHWRI NEHRU

*Srinagar*



PRESENTED  
to  
MAHATMA GANDHI  
on his  
76th Birth-day

—*Publ*

## EARLY LIFE

*" True to the normal pattern for a Hindu wife, Kasturba has been devoted to him (Mahatma Gandhi) ever since their marriage and she has subdued her personality to fit her husband's many-sided life. She has stood by him through all his adventures and through what others have called his idiosyncrasies—she has gone from fabulous riches to dire poverty, and has been his co-sufferer during his imprisonments and fastings, and even his Brahmacharya (celibacy)."*<sup>1</sup>

—KRISHANLAL SHRIDHARANI

isher It was in 1869, probably in the month of April that Shriyukta Verajkunvar Ba gave birth in Porbander, the capital of Rajkot State, to a child, who was named Kasturba. Gandhiji was born in October, 1869. This shows she was older than her husband by seven months. But, according to Shriyut Madhavadas Gokuldas, her only brother, Kasturba was three to four months younger than her husband. In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi says that Kasturba was of the same age as himself. Here it may be mentioned that not only both of them were born in the same year but in the same city of Porbander.

Her father, Shriyut Gokuldas Makanji was a merchant dealing in grains, cotton and cloth. He could never have imagined that his daughter during her life-

<sup>1</sup> *War Without Violence*, p. 169.

time was destined to play a conspicuous part in the struggle for the freedom of her motherland. Nor could anybody foretell that she would be the life-partner of a man to rank among the greatest men of the age.

Being the eldest daughter, she was the pet child of the family and was brought up with great love and affection. Those were the days when female education was neither so popular nor so common as it is today. Hence she did not receive proper education. She could only read Gujrati and that too with difficulty. She as well as her parents were unintentionally indifferent towards this aspect of her bringing up. Though of a shy nature, she appeared to be a more self-willed child than her playmates.

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#### INDIA AND EMPIRE

In my opinion if the British Government mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection. I would therefore strive for Swaraj within the Empire but would not hesitate to sever all connections, if severance became a necessity through Britain's fault. I would then throw the burden of separation on the British people.

—MAHATMA GANDHI  
*in his Presidential address in 1924.*

## II

### MARRIAGE

*"Remember that I really came to enjoy my married life after I ceased to look at Ba sexually. I took the vow of abstinence when I was in the prime of youth and health, when I was young enough to enjoy married life in the accepted sense of the term. I saw in a flash that I was born, as we all are, for a sacred mission. I did not know this when I was married. But on coming to my senses I felt that I must see that the marriage subserved the mission for which I was born. Then indeed did I realise true dharma. True happiness came into our lives only after the vow was taken. Ba, though she looks frail, has a fine constitution and toils from morning until night. She would never have done so had she continued to be the object of my lust."*

—MAHATMA GANDHI.

Young Kasturba was betrothed to Mohandas Gandhi when she was only seven years of age, and she was married in her thirteenth year. It may be mentioned here by the way that young Gandhi had been betrothed twice before this but both the girls chosen for him died. At the time of her wedding little did she know what trials and tribulations were awaiting her in her later life.

The actual marriage ceremony was performed at Porbander in 1882. Young Mohandas' father, Shriyut

in connection with his service, returned to Porbander for this marriage accompanied by other members of the family. The ceremony was celebrated with pomp and show.

"The wedding day," writes the Rev. Joseph J. Doke, Baptist Minister, Johannesburg, who met Gandhiji in South Africa and had several interviews with him, "was very merry. Mohandas, his brother and his cousin were married at the same time. A number of relatives were present, flowers in abundance made the home gay, and as the brides and bridegrooms were but children, every part of the ceremony, from the priestly chanting of *mantras* to the game of cowrie-shells, was full of enjoyment.

"Frequently in India, the bride and the bridegroom are strangers to each other until the wedding day, and sometimes it happens when the veil is lifted for the first time; life together begins with a shock of revulsion. In this case, however, custom was ignored. One imagines that the parents involved must have been more liberal in their views than their strict observance of Hindu rituals would suggest. At any rate, the little bride-elect was brought to Rajkot sometime before the marriage, and the two children became playmates in Gandhi's home."<sup>1</sup>

"I", writes Mahatma Gandhi, "can picture to myself, even today, how we sat on our wedding *dais*, how we performed the *sapdpadi*, how we, the newly wedded husband and wife, put the sweet *kansar* into each other's mouth, and how we began to live together. And oh! that first night. Two innocent children all unwittingly

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *an Indian Patriot in South Africa*, p. 21.

hurled themselves into the ocean of life. My brother's wife had thoroughly coached me about my behaviour on the first night. I do not know who had coached my wife. I have never asked her about it nor am I inclined to do so now. The reader may be sure that we were too nervous to face each other. We were certainly too shy. How was I to talk to her, and what was I to say? The coaching could not carry me far. But no coaching is really necessary in such matters. The impressions of the former birth are potent enough to make all coaching superfluous. We gradually began to know each other and to speak freely together. We were of the same age. But I took no time in assuming the authority of a husband"<sup>1</sup>

"Mahatma Gandhi and Mrs. Gandhi belong to that period," writes Ela Sen in her book, "in India's social history that is associated with child marriage, *purdah* and a rigid caste system. It (marriage) was a great adventure, and Gandhi took his duties as a husband very seriously, as immature youth is often inclined to do. His sense of fidelity was very strong, but this tended rather to make him jealous and suspicious, and this was most irksome for his wife, who was a girl of spirit and personality."<sup>2</sup>

The maxim that 'the course of true love never runs smooth' proved too true in Kasturba's case. Young Mohandas loved his wife with all the zeal at his command. The more he loved her, the more he desired to make her an ideal wife. Hence the struggle. In his autobiography in the chapter under

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Wives of Famous Men*, p. 21.

the heading "Playing the husband," he writes :

"Life-long faithfulness to the wife, inculcated in these booklets (in which conjugal love, thrift, child marriages, and other subjects were discussed) as the duty of the husband remained permanently imprinted on my heart. Furthermore, the passion for truth was innate in me, and to be false to her was therefore out of question. And then there was very little chance of my being faithless at that tender age.

"But the lesson of faithfulness had also an untoward effect. If I should be pledged to be faithful to my wife she also should be pledged to be faithful to me. The thought made me a jealous husband. Her duty was easily converted into my right to exact faithfulness from her, and if it had to be exacted, I should be watchfully tenacious of the right. I had absolutely no reason to suspect my wife's fidelity, but jealousy does not wait for reasons. I must need be for ever on the look-out regarding her movements and therefore she could not go anywhere without my permission. This sowed the seed of a bitter quarrel between us. The restraint was virtually a sort of imprisonment. And Kasturba was not the girl to brook any such thing. She made it a point to go out whenever and wherever she liked. 2

"More restraint on my part resulted in more liberty being taken by her and in my getting more and more cross. Refusal to speak to one another thus became the order of the day with us, married children. I think it was quite innocent of Kasturba to have taken those liberties with my restrictions. How could a guileless girl brook any restraints on

going to the temple or on going on visits to friends. If I had the right to impose restrictions on her, had not she also a similar right? All this is clear to me today. But at that time I had to make good my authority as a husband.

"Let not the reader think, however, that ours was a life of unrelieved bitterness. For my severities were all based on love. I wanted to make my wife an ideal wife. My ambition was to make her live a pure life, learn what I learnt, and identify her life and thought with mine.

"I do not know whether Kasturba had any such ambition. She was illiterate. By nature she was simple, independent, persevering and, with me at least, reticent. She was not impatient of her ignorance and I do not recollect my studies having ever spurred her to go in for a similar adventure. I fancy, therefore, that my ambition was all one-sided. My passion was entirely centred on one woman, and I wanted it to be reciprocated. But even if there were no reciprocity, it could not be all unrelieved misery because there was active love on one side at least."<sup>1</sup>

After his marriage, Mohandas came to Rajkot for higher education, where he lived with his father. Young Kasturba was also there at her father-in-law's house. How deeply was she loved by her husband is shown clearly in the following passage :

"I must say I was passionately fond of her.

Even at school I used to think of her, and the thought of nightfall and our subsequent meeting ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ever haunting me. Separation was unbearable. I used to keep her awake till late in the night with my idle talk. If, with this devouring

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, pp. 22 and 23.





passion, there had not been in me a burning attachment to duty, I should either have fallen a prey to disease and premature death, or have sunk into a burdensome existence. But the appointed tasks had to be gone through every morning, and lying to anyone was out of question.<sup>1</sup>

After marriage, Gandhiji tried his level best to teach her. As he himself could not devote much time due to being busy, he entrusted this work to private tutors. But he failed and this is how he narrates the causes of his failure :

“ I have already said that Kasturba was illiterate. I was very anxious to teach her, but lustful love left me no time. For one thing the teaching had to be done against her will and that too at night. I dared not meet her in the presence of the elders, much less talk to her. Kathiawad had then, and to a certain extent has even today, its own peculiar, useless and barbarous *purdah*. Circumstances were thus unfavourable, I must, therefore, confess that most of my efforts to instruct Kasturba in our youth were unsuccessful. And when I awoke from the sleep of lust, I had already launched forth into public life, which did not leave me much spare time. I failed likewise to instruct her through private tutors. As a result, Kasturba can now with difficulty write simple letters and understand simple Gujrati. I am sure that had my love for her been absolutely untainted with lust, she would be a learned lady today ; for I could then have conquered her dislike for studies. I know that nothing is impossible for pure love.

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 24.

"During the first five years of our married life (from the age of 13 to 18), we could not have lived together longer than an aggregate period of three years. We would hardly have spent six months together, when there would be a call to my wife from her parents. Such calls were unwelcome in those days, but they saved us both."<sup>1</sup>

It goes to her credit that, while in her teens, Kasturba possessed more of common sense and the ability to judge human beings than even her husband, who at that time was 'too proud to heed to her warning that he was in bad company,' though 'the same company would have led him into faithlessness to his wife.' Mahatma Gandhi writes as follows about this incident :—

"One of the reasons of my differences with my wife was undoubtedly the company of a friend. I was both a devoted and a jealous husband, and this friend fanned the flame of my suspicions about my wife. I never could doubt his veracity. And I have never forgiven myself the violence of which I have been guilty in often having pained my wife by acting on his information. Perhaps only a Hindu wife would tolerate these hardships, and that is why I have regarded woman as an incarnation of tolerance. A servant wrongly suspected may throw up his job, a son in the same case may leave his father's roof and a friend may put an end to the friendship. The wife, if she suspects her husband, will keep quiet, but if the husband suspects her, she is ruined. Where is she to go? A Hindu wife may not seek divorce in a law-court. Law has no remedy for her. And I can never forget or for-

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 25.



give myself for having driven my wife to that desperation.

"The canker of suspicion was rooted out only when I understood 'Ahimsa' in all its bearings. I saw then the glory of 'Brahmacharya' and realized that the wife is not the husband's bondslave, but his companion and his helpmate, and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows—as free as the husband to choose her own path. Whenever I think of those dark days of doubts and suspicions, I am filled with loathing of my folly and my lustful cruelty, and I deplore my blind devotion to my friend."<sup>1</sup>

Besides commonsense, she had a lot of courage and was not afraid of thieves, ghosts and serpents. The Mahatma says in his autobiography:—

"I was a coward. I used to be haunted by the fears of thieves, ghosts and serpents. I did not dare stir out of doors at night. Darkness was a terror to me. It was almost impossible for me to sleep in the dark, as I would imagine ghosts coming from one direction, thieves from another, and serpents from a third. I could not therefore bear to sleep without a light in the room. How could I disclose my fears to my wife, no child, but already at the threshold of youth sleeping by my side? I knew that she had more courage than I, and I felt ashamed of myself. She knew no fear of serpents and ghosts. She could go out anywhere in the dark."<sup>2</sup>

The year 1884 was not auspicious for the young couple. Mohandas lost his father whom he served as

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 33.

much. Kasturba gave birth to her first child, who, unfortunately, could not live for more than three or four days. The loss was too great for her to bear. The happiness which she would have enjoyed was so shortlived that it nearly broke her heart. The disappointment and the affliction caused her immense pain, but she bore it like a true Hindu woman.

In 1886 she gave birth to another son, and he was only of two years when young Mohandas left for England for higher education. In those days it was not an easy job for a caste Hindu to go abroad, but the head of the family—the aged mother—was so determined that she did not seem to care for any opposition whatsoever. Only she was anxious lest her son might fall a prey to the vices prevalent in the West. She gave her consent only when her son promised most solemnly to abide by the vows which she asked him to take in her presence. The great leader stands testimony to the fact that while he was in England, these vows sustained him. The thought of his wife, whom he had left behind, stood him in good stead. His letter to an English lady who introduced him to a young girl is typical in its frankness, in which he wrote : “ I must confess to you that I have been unworthy of your affection. I should have told you when I began my visits to you that I was married.”<sup>1</sup>

In England he became an under-graduate of the London University. He then joined the Inner Temple, whence he emerged in due course a barrister-at-law in 1891. Next year he returned to India.

He was still in England when his mother died, but the sad news was not conveyed to him lest he be up-

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 88.



set and his studies disturbed. He came to know of this only when he landed in Bombay. This loss was greater to Kasturba, who was all along being guided by her. The mother-in-law was a religious lady who was most influential in her house. She was, in fact, a woman in a thousand. Young Kasturba derived much of her wisdom, foresight and religious bent of mind from her while her husband was away. She used to console her and the example of her mother-in-law was better than any precept.

The young barrister was first admitted as an advocate in the Bombay High Court, where he did not remain for more than six months. His wife did not go with him. As he did not achieve much success in Bombay, he returned to Rajkot, where he got a flourishing clientele.

Though the husband and wife were together after such a painful separation, their domestic life was not so smooth. This is what Gandhiji writes about their life at that time :

"My relations with my wife were still not as I desired. Even my stay in England had not cured me of jealousy. I continued my squeamishness and suspiciousness in respect of every little thing, and hence all my cherished desires remained unfulfilled. I had decided that my wife should learn reading and writing and that I should help her in her studies but my lust came in the way and she had to suffer for my own shortcomings. Once I went to the length of sending her away to her father's house and consented to receive her back only after I had made her thoroughly miserable. I saw later that this was pure folly on my part."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 116.



### III

#### FORETASTE OF A NEW LIFE

*"This is a dangerous and discreditable situation. It is dangerous and discreditable to the whole British Empire, not only to South Africa. An Empire where elementary rights are not common and common membership has no significance, lacks some civilising properties possessed by the Roman Empire, which gives justification to the attempt to combine the Government of different peoples in one large society."*

—MANCHESTER GUARDIAN.

Gandhiji had hardly established his practice at Rajkot when in April 1893, he was persuaded to go to South Africa in connection with a case of an Indian firm doing business in that country. He went alone. He landed at Durban in May, and proceeded to Natal and then to Transvaal. He stayed there up to 1895. During these three years a new philosophy of life dawned on him consequent upon the disillusionments which awaited him there. "Brought up in British traditions," says one of his biographers, "of the equality of British subjects, an honoured guest in the capital of the Empire, he found that in the British Colony of Natal he was regarded as a pariah, scarcely higher than savage aboriginal native of the soil."<sup>1</sup>

Being a witness and a victim to wrongs, Gandhiji 'awoke to a sense of duty'. He encountered hardships on railway trains. He received thrashings. Ordinarily

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *a Sketch of His Life and Career*, p. 8.



it was impossible to secure accommodation in hotels run by whites. Once at Maritzburg, he was pushed out of the train by a police constable, and the train having left, he had to sit in the waiting room, shivering in the bitter cold. He even did not know where his luggage was and he had not the courage to inquire of any body lest he may be insulted and assaulted. He came to know that Indians could not enter the railway station by the main gate and it was difficult for them even to purchase tickets. The climax was reached when the Local Government's intention to introduce a bill to disenfranchise Indians was made known. His application for admission as an advocate of the Supreme Court of Natal was opposed on the sole ground that the law did not contemplate that coloured barristers should be placed on the roll. Under such circumstances in May, 1894, he founded the Natal Indian Congress with a view to organising the Indian settlers so that they may ventilate their grievances and get the wrong redressed through an organisation of their own. It completed its first year in the middle of 1895, and next year he returned to India because he intended 'to educate public opinion and create more interest in Indians of South Africa.' Moreover, he 'had established a fairly good practice and could see that people felt the need of his presence. So he made up his mind to go home fetch his wife and children, and then return and settle up there.

Here it may be mentioned that in the meantime Shrimati Kasturba had given birth to another son who was afterwards named Manilal. The first son had already been named Hirallal.

In the middle of 1896 he returned to India and in November he received a cable, while he was in Cal

cutta, from Natal in which he was requested to return immediately. During this period he visited various provinces of India, met leaders of public opinion and delivered a number of speeches criticising the Europeans of Natal. The whites in South Africa got enraged on learning about the agitation carried on in India by him through the brief cables sent by Reuter.

"This was my first voyage with my wife and children", he writes. "I have often observed that on account of child marriages amongst middle class Hindus, the husband will be literate whilst the wife remains practically unlettered. A wide gulf thus separates them, and the husband has to become his wife's teacher. So I had to think out the details of the dress to be adopted by my wife and children, the food they were to eat, and the manners which would be suited to their new surroundings. A Hindu wife regards implicit obedience to her husband as the highest religion. A Hindu husband regards himself as lord and master of his wife, who must ever dance attendance upon him." I believed that, in order to look civilised, our dress and manners had as far as possible to approximate to the European standard. Because I thought only thus could we have some influence, and without influence it would not be possible to serve the community.

"I therefore determined the style of dress for my wife and children. How could I like them to be known as Kathiawad *Banias*? The Parsis used then to be regarded as the most civilised people amongst Indians, and so, when the complete European style seemed to be unsuited, we adopted the Parsi style. Accordingly my wife wore the Parsi



saree, and the boys the Parsi coat and trousers. Of course, no one could be without shoes and stockings. It was long before my wife and children could get used to them. The shoes cramped their feet and the stockings stank with perspiration. The toes often got sore. I always had my answers ready to all these objections. But I have an impression that it was not so much the answers as the force of an authority that carried conviction. They agreed to the changes in dress as there was no alternative. In the same spirit and with even more reluctance they adopted the use of knives and forks. When my infatuation for these signs of civilisation wore away, they gave up the knives and forks. After having become long accustomed to the new style, it was perhaps no less irksome for them to return to the original mode. But I can see today that we feel all the freer and lighter for having cast off the tinsel of 'civilisation'."<sup>1</sup>

By the time Gandhiji returned to South Africa with his family, the minds of the Europeans had already been poisoned by systematic propaganda that had been carried on against him by interested parties. The distorted version of the speeches that he had delivered in India was enough to inflame the whites. To crown all this, the approach of two ships in which the indentured labourers were travelling was construed to be an invasion of Natal, although these people were travelling quite independently of him. The whites were told that Gandhi was importing quite a large number of skilled labourers with the sole object of ousting the Europeans from the field of employment. The propaganda was carried on in such a subtle way and

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 230.

was so deep-rooted that even the Attorney-General, Mr. Escombe, was caught in this whirlpool. He took not only a prominent part in the agitation but, as Gandhiji says, instigated the members of the European community against the Indians.

Both the ships cast anchor on or about December 18 in the port of Durban. The Government of Natal, bowing before the agitation of the Europeans, issued orders that the vessels be detained in quarantine. The doctor who examined the passengers at first told them that a five days' quarantine would do, but actually the ships were detained for as many as twenty-three days. This period was fully utilised by the Europeans in carrying on anti-Indian propaganda. They threatened the passengers with dire consequences in case they made a forced landing. They were even prepared to push every Indian into the sea. When they saw the determination of the passengers to land, they tried to persuade the owners of the ships by various inducements to take back the labourers to India. The ship-owners were also told that in case of their refusal, they would have to suffer the loss of their entire business. Fortunately, they did not succumb to the threats. The credit for all this bold attitude goes to the advocate of the firm, Mr. F. A. Laughton, who advised them and supported them, while condemning strongly the attitude adopted by the Whites. The quarantine was lifted by the Government of Natal after 23 days when the ship-owners announced their intention to take legal action against the authorities responsible for it.

The vessels were brought into the dock on January 13, 1897. A hostile crowd of the Whites greeted the passengers. Mr. Escombe now tried to pacify his compatriots. He sent a word to Gandhiji and advised

him not to land before evening, as he had expected that by that time the crowd was sure to dwindle. Gandhiji was thinking as to what he should do when Mr. Laughton came to see him. On his advice, Shrimati Kasturba, along with children, was sent to Mr. Rustomji's place while Gandhiji accompanied Mr. Laughton. It was not possible for the former to pass through the streets of Durban without being noticed because of the turban which he was wearing. Hence he was recognised soon after his landing. Some young Whites shouted his name and a crowd soon gathered. Mr. Laughton scenting trouble tried to get the services of a rickshaw coolie. But when the coolie was threatened, he fled away. Both of them had hardly gone a few steps ahead when they were separated forcibly by the swelling crowd. Gandhiji was then made the main target. Not only stones and eggs were thrown at him, but he was beaten and kicked. He had almost fainted, when the wife of the Police Superintendent passing by recognised him and came forward to his rescue. In the meanwhile, somebody informed her husband, who happened to be at that time in the police station. He lost no time in sending some of his constables to escort him safely to his destination. Gandhiji reached Rustomji Seth's house without further trouble. At night the house was practically besieged by the Whites. Gandhiji, with a view to save his life as well as his friend's property from the fury of the mob, managed to escape, disguising himself as a constable, and reached a nearby police station. When the Police Superintendent convinced the mob that Gandhiji had left, the crowd dispersed. After some days, Mr. Escombe sent for him and expressed regret on behalf of the then Secretary of State for Colonies. He even offered to prosecute



the offenders but Gandhiji expressed his unwillingness to pursue the matter.

Before I close this chapter, I must say something about the part played by Kasturba in all these happenings. Being an intelligent young woman, she must have given much time to ponder over what had happened. Her husband was held in high esteem by his countrymen for the services he had already rendered to the Indian settlers in South Africa. After his tour in India, he had become a well-known figure by the speeches which he delivered in various cities and towns in the country. While on her way to a foreign country, she must have fondly imagined that they would be having a right royal reception from their countrymen, friends and admirers on landing in South Africa. All these imaginings met with a rude shock. The days of suspense and anxiety that she passed on board the ship during her quarantine period must have given her a foretaste of the life which was in store for her. The way in which she, along with her children, was smuggled out and the kicks and slaps that her husband received on the first day of their arrival in Durban must have made it clear to her that, if she wanted to lead a life of a self-respecting human being, she must be prepared to face great hardships and sufferings. Fearless as she was, she did not lose her presence of mind and remained calm and composed even when her husband had to leave the house at night. Nobody knows the feelings hidden in the innermost recesses of her heart, but the elegant way in which she behaved produced a very favourable effect upon the minds of those with whom she came in contact. She proved her mettle in the days she passed in Rustomji Seth's house while separated from her husband whose very life was in danger.

The dignified manner in which Gandhiji bore all these indignities and his reply to Mr. Escombe made the Whites realise their mistake. The newspapers condemned the action of the mob and apologised to him. As for Mr. Escombe, one of Gandhiji's biographers has written that 'years afterwards, meeting Mr. Gandhi one day, he expressed profound regret at his connection with that unsavoury business, declaring that at the time, he was unacquainted with Mr. Gandhi's personal merits and those of the community to which he belonged. Half an hour later he was found dead in the streets, stricken down by heart disease.'<sup>1</sup>

### EMBRACE OF DEATH

The British Empire today is indeed gradually undergoing a process of political dissolution. It is in a state of unstable equilibrium. The Union of South Africa is not a very happy member of the family, nor is the Irish Free State—a willing one. Egypt drifts away. India could never be an equal member of the Commonwealth, unless imperialism and all it implies is discarded. So long as this is not done, India's position in the Empire must be one of subservience and her exploitation will continue. The embrace of British Empire is a dangerous thing. It cannot be the life-giving embrace of affection freely given and returned. And if it is not that, it will be, what it has been in the past, the embrace of death.

—PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU  
in his Presidential address in 1929.

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *a Sketch of his Life and Career*, p. 11.

## IV

### SATYAGRAH AT HOME

*"I could not steal into my wife's heart until I decided to treat her differently than I used to do and so I restored to her all her rights by dispossessing myself of all my so-called rights as her husband. And you see her to-day as simple as myself. You find no necklace, no fineries on her.*

—MAHATMA GANDHI.

THE years that Kasturba passed with her husband were not only stormy so far as her husband's public life was concerned but they could be well called eventful so far as their domestic life was concerned. Though too busy with the public work he had undertaken, he did not neglect his home affairs. He gave his best attention to the education of his children. When he realised that the arrangements of their education in South Africa were not satisfactory, he sent his elder son back to India, though he had to recall him soon when he made no progress there.

Not only as a father but also as a husband Gandhiji took his duties very seriously. He took proper care of his wife's health. When Kasturba was expecting a baby it was decided to have the best medical aid at the time of delivery. Taking into consideration the colour prejudices of White doctors and nurses and the absence of trained Indian nurses, Gandhiji tried to study what was necessary for safe labour, and this study stood him in good stead at the time of the birth of his two sons in South Africa.



" I put on a brave face, but was really ashamed and shut the gate. If my wife could not leave me, neither could I leave her. We have had numerous bickerings but the end has always been peace between us. The wife, with her matchless powers of endurance, has always been the victor.

Today I am in a position to narrate the incident with some detachment, as it belongs to a period out of which I have fortunately emerged. I am no longer a blind, infatuated husband ; I am no more my wife's teacher. Kasturba can, if she will, be unpleasant to me today, as I used to be to her before. We are tried friends, the one no longer regarding the other as the object of lust. She has been a faithful nurse throughout my illnesses, serving without any thought of reward.

The incident in question occurred in 1898, when I had no conception of "*Brahmacharya*." It was a time when I thought that the wife was the object of her husband's lust, born to do her husband's behest, rather than a helpmate, a comrade and partner in the husband's joys and sorrows.

" Let no one conclude from this narrative of a sacred recollection that we are by any means an ideal couple, or that there is a complete identity of ideals between us. Kasturba herself does not perhaps know whether she has any ideals independently of me. It is likely that many of my doings have not her approval even today. We never discuss them. I see no good in discussing them. For she was educated neither by her parents nor by me at the time when I ought to have done it. But she is blessed with one great quality to a very considerable degree, a quality which most Hindu wives

possess in some measure. And it is this : willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, she has considered herself blessed in following in my footsteps, and has never stood in the way of my endeavour to lead a life of restraint. Though, therefore, there is a wide difference between us intellectually, I have always had the feeling that ours is a life of contentment, happiness and progress."<sup>1</sup>

The incident related above shows how Gandhiji tried to introduce—nay, force—social reform in his own life. Whenever he found his orthodox wife unwilling to agree to do a certain thing, he exercised his authority, and the above is one instance.

Like a sincere and true public worker, Gandhiji has, from the very beginning of his public life, stuck to this principle that for services rendered to the public, a worker should not demand any compensation. They should be out and out selfless. If some gifts are presented to a public worker, he should hand them over to a common cause meant to serve the people. A firm believer in this lofty principle that he was, he did not accept for his personal use the gifts which were offered to him on the eve of his return to India. At that time Kasturba Gandhi could not appreciate the spirit of service underlying this principle. She objected to the gifts being handed over to a common fund. This is how Gandhiji relates this story :

" Gifts had been bestowed on me before when I returned to India in 1896, but this time the farewell was overwhelming. The gifts of course included things in gold and silver, but there were articles of costly diamond as well.

" What right had I to accept all these gifts ?

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 340.

Accepting them, how could I persuade myself that I was serving the community without remuneration? All the gifts, excepting a few from my clients were purely for my service to the community, and I could make no difference between my clients and co-workers for the clients also helped me in my public work.

"One of the gifts was a gold necklace worth fifty guineas meant for my wife. But even this gift was given because of my public work, and it could not be separated from the rest.

"The evening I was presented with the bulk of these things I had a sleepless night. I walked up and down in my room deeply agitated, but could find no solution. It was difficult for me to forego gifts worth hundreds; it was more difficult to keep them.

"And even if I could keep them, what about my children? What about my wife? They were being trained to a life of service and to an understanding that service was its own reward.

"I had no costly ornaments in the house. I had been fast simplifying our life. How then could we afford to have gold watches? How could I afford to wear gold chains and diamond rings? Even then I was exhorting people to conquer their infatuation for jewellery. What was I now to do with the jewellery that had come upon me?

"I decided that I could not keep these things. I drafted a letter, creating a trust of them in favour of the community and appointing Parsi Rustumji and others as trustees. In the morning I held a consultation with my wife and children and finally got rid of the heavy incubus.

"I knew that I should have some difficulty in

suading my wife, and I was sure that I should have none so far as the children were concerned. So I decided to constitute them my attorneys.

"The children readily agreed to my proposal. 'We do not need these costly presents, we must return them to the community, and should we ever need them, we could easily purchase them,' they said.

"I was delighted. 'Then you will plead with mother, won't you?' I asked them.

"They said, 'Certainly. That is our business. She does not need to wear the ornaments. She would want to keep them for us; if we don't want them, why should she not agree to part with them.'

"But it was easier said than done. 'You may not need them,' said my wife. 'Your children may not need them. Cajoled, they will dance to your tune. I can understand you not permitting me to wear them. But what about my daughters-in-law? They will be sure to need them. And who knows what will happen tomorrow? I would be the last person to part with gifts so lovingly given.

"And thus the torrent of argument went on, reinforced, in the end, by tears. But the children were adamant. And I was unmoved.'

"I mildly put in: 'The children have yet to get married. We do not want to see them married young. When they are grown up, they can take care of themselves. And surely we shall not have, for our sons, brides who are fond of ornaments. And if, after all, we need to provide them with ornaments, I am there. You will ask me then.'

"Ask you? I know you by this time. You deprived me of my ornaments; you would not leave me in peace with them. Fancy you offering to get ornaments for





the daughters-in-law ! You who are trying to *Sadhus* of my boys from today ! No, the ornament will not be returned. And, pray, what right have you to my necklace ?

" 'But' I rejoined, ' is the necklace given to you for your service or for my service ?'

" 'I agree. But service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled and moiled for you day and night. Is that no service ? You fasted all and sundry on me, making me weep bitterly and I slaved for them !

"These were pointed thrusts and some of them I went home but I was determined to return the compliments. I somehow succeeded in extorting a confession from her. The gifts received in 1896 and 1901 were all returned. A trust deed was prepared, and the gifts were deposited with a bank, to be used for the service of the community, according to my wishes to those of the trustees.

"Often when I was in need of funds for personal purposes and felt that I must draw upon the trust, I have been able to raise the requisite amount, leaving the trust money intact. The fund is still there, but has been operated upon in times of need, and it has regularly accumulated.

"I have never since regretted the step, and as years have gone by, my wife has also seen its wisdom. It has saved us both from many temptations.

"I am definitely of opinion that a public woman should accept no costly gifts."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji with his wife and children came to India in 1901. Leaving other members of his family in Rajkot he alone went to Calcutta in December where

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 272.

annual session of the Indian National Congress was held in which he moved a resolution about Indians in South Africa. On his return at first he settled down at Rajkot and some time afterwards he shifted to Bombay, where he hired chambers in the fort and a house in Girgaum. He had to leave this house very soon as he found it unhealthy. He then hired a fine bungalow in Santa Cruz. He got himself insured for Rs. 10,000, but when his ideas changed, he ceased to pay the premiums, because, "in getting my life insured I had robbed my wife and children of their self-reliance," he thought.<sup>1</sup>

He had not yet fully settled down there when he received a cable from South Africa in which he was requested to return immediately and he did so leaving his wife and children behind in India. This is how he expresses his feelings at that time :

"The separation from wife and children, the breaking up of a settled establishment, and the going from the certain to the uncertain, all this was for a moment painful, but I had insured myself to an uncertain life. I think it is wrong to expect certainties in this world, where all else but God, that is truth, is an uncertainty. All that appears and happens about and around us is uncertain, transient. But there is a supreme Being hidden therein as a certainty, and one would be blessed if one could catch a glimpse of that certainty and hitch one's waggon to it. The quest for truth is *summum bonum* of life"<sup>2</sup>

He had passed only a few months in South Africa when he realised that to serve his countrymen better, he should get himself enrolled as a barrister in the Transvaal Supreme Court and stay permanently there. He therefore sent for his wife and children from India.

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 308.



## LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

"Persons in power should be very careful when they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasures, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promises but simply determines to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and comfortable enemy because his body, which you always conquer, gives you so little purchase upon his soul."

—PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRI

In South Africa, Gandhiji started a settlement Phoenix in 1904. The arrangements for the publication of *Indian Opinion* were made there. Though he was very enthusiastic about the success of the experiment, he was not able to stay there for long. He had to go to Johannesburg. In his absence, the work in the settlement went on as usual. As for life in the Settlement, Gandhiji says: "In order to enable every one of us to make a living by manual labour, we parcelled out the land round the press into pieces of three acres each. One of these fell to me. On all these plots we, much against our will, built houses with corrugated iron. Our desire had been to have mud huts thatched with straw or sun-dried brick houses such as would become ordinary peasant dwellings but it could not be. They would have been more expensive and would have meant more time, and every one was eager to settle down as soon as possible."

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 372.

At Johannesburg, Gandhiji tried to introduce as much simplicity as was possible in his house. Kasturba also got adapted to the changes that had taken place, so much so that she even helped her husband and children to grind the corn. When Mr. H. S. L. Polak who was living at that time with them, was married, Kasturba made the life of his wife no comfortable that she never felt, herself a stranger in that house. He writes : "Even if Mrs. Polak and my wife had had some unpleasant experiences, they would have been no more than what happen in the best-regulated homogeneous families."<sup>1</sup> When Mr. West, another friend of Gandhiji's, married, his wife too was very cordially received by all the members of the family.

When the 'Zulu Rebellion' broke out, Gandhiji offered every help that he could render, to the British Government and he planned to form an Indian Ambulance Corps. Kasturba also rose to the occasion. She was consulted by Gandhiji in whatever the latter was thinking of doing. "If my offer was accepted," says Gandhiji, "I had decided to break up the Johannesburg home. My wife was to go and settle at Phoenix. I had her full consent to this decision. I do not remember her having ever stood in my way in matters like this."<sup>2</sup> What a fine tribute Gandhiji pays to his devoted wife.

She was accordingly sent to Phoenix, and Gandhiji went to Durban, where a big contingent was formed. He led it to the battle-field, where he saw the horrors of war with his own eyes. This gave him much food for serious thinking. Though he felt very much against what was going on around him, he had the

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 383.



satisfaction that he was serving and nursing the wounded Zulus, most of whom would have died, had no medical aid been there for them.

Immediately after the termination of the Rebellion Gandhiji began to think about taking a vow of celibacy. He had been regulating his life willy-nilly since 1900, for this purpose, and in the middle of 1904 he took the solemn vow. It goes to the credit of Shrimati Kasturba that she did not stand in the way of her husband but gladly agreed to pay well in whatever roll he liked.

As we have seen and will see throughout this narrative Kasturba was a lady who possessed extraordinary courage of convictions. She was ready to lay her life for what she believed to be right. She could willingly and voluntarily face death for her faith. Gandhiji has related an incident in his autobiography in the following words :—

Thrice in her life my wife narrowly escaped death through serious illness. The cures were due to household remedies. At the time of her first attack Satyagraha was going on or was about to commence. She had frequent hæmorrhage. A medical friend advised a surgical operation, to which she agreed after some hesitation. She was extremely emaciated, and the doctor had to perform the operation without chloroform. It was successful, but she had to suffer much pain. She, however, went through it with wonderful bravery. The doctor and his wife who nursed were all attention. This was in Durban. The doctor gave me leave to go to Johannesburg, and told me to have any anxiety about the patient.

In a few days, however, I received a letter to effect that Kasturba was worse, too weak to sit up



bed, and had once become unconscious. The doctor knew that he might not, without my consent give her wines or meat. So he telephoned to me at Johannesburg for permission to give her beef tea. I replied saying I could not grant the permission, but that if she was in a condition to express her wish in the matter, she might be consulted, and she was free to do as she liked. 'But', said the doctor, 'I refuse to consult the patient's wishes in the matter. You must come yourself. If you do not leave me free to prescribe whatever diet I like, I will not hold myself responsible for your wife's life.'

I took the train for Durban the same day, and met the doctor who quietly broke this news to me: 'I had already given Mrs. Gandhi beef tea when I telephoned to you.'

'Now, doctor, I call this a fraud,' said I.

'No question of fraud in prescribing medicine or diet for a patient. In fact we doctors consider it a virtue to deceive patients or their relatives, if thereby we can save our patients,' said the doctor with determination.

I was deeply pained, but kept cool. The doctor was a good man and a personal friend. He and his wife had laid me under a debt of gratitude, but I was not prepared to put up with his medical morals.

'Doctor, tell me what you propose to do now. I would never allow my wife to be given meat or beef, even if the denial meant her death, unless of course she desired to take it.'

'You are welcome to your philosophy. I tell you that, so long as you keep your wife under my treatment, I must have the option to give her anything I wish. If you don't like this I must regretfully ask



you to remove her, I can't see her die under my roof.

'Do you mean to say that I must remove her at once?'

'Whenever did I ask you to remove her? I only want to be left entirely free. If you do so, my wife and I will do all that is possible for her, and you may go back without the least anxiety on her score. But if you will not understand this simple thing you will compel me to ask you to remove your wife from my place.'

I think one of my sons was with me. He entirely agreed with me, and said his mother should not be given beef tea, I next spoke to Kasturba herself. She was really too weak to be consulted in this matter.

But I thought it my painful duty to do so. I told her what had passed between the doctor and myself. She gave a resolute reply: 'I will not take beef tea. It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being, and I would far rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations.'

I pleaded with her, I told her that she was not bound to follow me. I cited to her the instances of Hindu friends and acquaintances who had no scruples about taking meat or wine as medicine. But she was adamant. 'No,' said she, 'pray remove me at once.'

I was delighted. Not without some agitation I decided to take her away. I informed the doctor of her resolve. He exclaimed in a rage: 'What a callous man you are! You should have been ashamed to broach the matter to her in her present condition. I tell you, your wife is not in a fit state to be removed. She cannot stand the least little hustling. I shouldn't be surprised if she were to die on the way. But if you must persist, you are free to do so. If you will not

give her beef tea, I will not take the risk of keeping her under my roof even for a single day.'

So we decided to leave the place at once. It was drizzling and the station was some distance. We had to take the train from Durban for Phoenix, whence our settlement was reached by a road of two miles and a half. I was undoubtedly taking a very great risk. I sent a messenger to Phoenix in advance, with a message to West to receive us at the station with a hammock, a bottle of hot milk and one of hot water, and six men to carry Kasturba in the hammock. I got a rickshaw to enable me to take her by the next available train, put her into it in that dangerous condition and marched away.

Kasturba needed no cheering up. On the contrary, she comforted me, saying: 'Nothing will happen to me. Don't worry.'

She was a mere skin and bone, having had no nourishment for days. The station platform was very large, and as the rickshaw could not be taken inside, one had to walk some distance before one could reach the train. So I carried her in my arms and put her into the compartment. From Phoenix we carried her in the hammock, and there she slowly picked up strength under hydropathic treatment.

In two or three days of our arrival at Phoenix a Swami came to our place. He had heard of the resolute way in which we had rejected the doctor's advice, and he had, out of sympathy, come to plead with us. My second and third sons, Manilal and Ramdas so far as I can recollect, were present when the Swami came. He held forth on the religious harmlessness of meat, citing authorities from Manu. I did not like his carrying on this disputation in the

presence of my wife, but I suffered him to do so out of courtesy. I knew the verses from the *Manusmriti*. I did not need them for my conviction. I knew also that there was a school which regarded these verses as interpolations; but even if they were not, I held my views on vegetarianism independently of religious texts, and Kasturba's faith was unshakable. To her the scriptural texts were a sealed book, but the traditional religion of her forefathers was enough for her. The children swore by their father's creed and so they made light of the Swami's discourse. But Kasturba put an end to the dialogue at once. 'Swamiji,' she said, 'whatever you may say, I do not want to recover by means of beef tea. Pray don't worry me any more. You may discuss the thing with my husband and children if you like. But my mind is made up.'<sup>1</sup>

About their life in South Africa, Gandhiji has given an incident as an instance of Satyagraha and this he thinks 'one of the sweetest recollections of his life.' He writes:

"Kasturba, who had a brief respite after her operation, had again begun getting haemorrhage, and the malady seemed to be obstinate. Hydropathic treatment by itself did not answer. She had not much faith in my remedies, though she did not resist them. She certainly did not ask for outside help. So when all my remedies had failed, I entreated her to give up salt and pulses. She would not agree, however much I pleaded with her, supporting myself with authorities. At last she challenged me, saying that even I could not give up these articles if I was advised to do so. I was pained and equally delighted, —delighted in that I got an opportunity to shower my

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, pp. 394—397.

love on her. I said to her: 'You are mistaken. If I was ailing and the doctor advised me to give up these or any other articles, I should unhesitatingly do so. But there! Without any medical advice, I give up salt and pulses for one year, whether you do so or not.'

She was rudely shocked and exclaimed in deep sorrow: 'Pray forgive me. Knowing you, I should not have provoked you. I promise to abstain from these things, but for heaven's sake take back your vow. This is too hard on me.'

'It is very good for you to forego these articles. I have not the slightest doubt that you will be all the better without them. As for me, I cannot retract a vow seriously taken. And it is sure to benefit me, for all restraint, whatever prompts it, is wholesome for man. You will therefore leave me alone. It will be a test for me, and a moral support to you in carrying out your resolve.'

So she gave me up. 'You are too obstinate. You will listen to none', she said, and sought relief in tears.

After this she began to pick up quickly—whether as a result of the saltless and pulseless diet or of the other consequent changes in her food, whether as a result of my strict vigilance in exacting observance of the other rules of life, or as an effect of the mental exhilaration produced by the incident, and if so to what extent, I cannot say. But she rallied quickly, hæmorrhage completely stopped, and I added somewhat to my reputation as a quack.<sup>1</sup>

In Tolstoy Farm, Gandhiji tried to bring up educate boys and girls together, Shrimati Kastī 'had already warned him in the matter, but bein trusting nature, he had ignored her caution', and

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p. 399 and 400

was right. Gandhiji, when he 'received tidings of the moral fall of two of the inmates of the Ashram,' imposed upon himself a fast for seven days and a vow to have only one meal a day for a period of four months and a half. Not only this, but a circumstance arising out of the above incident compelled him, a little while after, to go again into a fast for fourteen days.

Here it may be mentioned that in 1910 the Tolstoy Farm was founded by Gandhiji and his friends with a view to train Satyagrahis who were required to settle there. The nearest railway station, Lawley, was about a mile from it and Johannesburg twenty-one miles. No servants were kept here not even for the farming and building operations. Everything from cooking to scavenging was done by the members. It had its own school as well as a workshop for carpentry and shoe-making etc. As to what part Shrimati Kasturba played here, is shown in a letter which Gandhiji wrote in 1912 to his friend Mr. Rattan Tata, from which I reproduce the following:—

"No paid servants are kept on the farm in connection either with the school or the kitchen. Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Sodha, assisted by two or three of the pupils, who are changed every week, attend to the whole of cooking. Non-smoking, non-drinking and vegetarianism are obligatory on the farm."<sup>1</sup>

During his campaign of Satyagrah in South Africa, Gandhiji at first did not allow ladies to take part; but at a later stage they were permitted to join the struggle. Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi along with her son, Ramdas, in the company of several others courted arrest. "I

<sup>1</sup> *The Modern Review* for June 1912, p. 679.

decided not to broach the subject to my wife," writes Gandhiji, "as she could not say no to any proposal I made, and if she said yes, I would not know what value to attach to her assent, and as I knew that in a serious matter like this the husband should leave the wife to take what step she liked on her own initiative, and should not be offended at all even if she did not take any step whatever. I talked to other sisters who readily fell in with my proposal and expressed their readiness to go to jail. They assured me that they would complete their term in jail, come what might. My wife overheard my conversation with the sisters, and addressing me said,

"I am sorry that you are not telling me about this. What defect is there in me which disqualifies me for jail? I also wish to take the path to which you are inviting the others."

"You know I am the last person to cause you pain," I replied. "There is no question of my distrust in you. I would be only too glad if you went to jail, but it should not appear at all as if you went at my instance. In matters like this every one should act relying solely upon one's own strength and courage. If I asked you, you might be inclined to go just for the sake of complying with my request. And then if you began to tremble in the law courts or were terrified by hardships in jail, I could not find fault with you, but how would it stand with me? How could I then harbour you or look the world in the face? It is fears like these which have prevented me from asking you too to court jail."

"You may have nothing to do with me," she said, "if being unable to stand jail I secure my release by an apology. If you can endure hardships and so can my





boys, why cannot I? I am bound to join the struggle.

"Then I am bound to admit you to it," she said. "You know my conditions and you know my temperament. Even now reconsider the matter if you and after mature thought you deliberately come to the conclusion not to join the movement, you are to withdraw. And you must understand that there is nothing to be ashamed of in changing your decision even now."

"I have nothing to think about, I am fully determined," she replied.<sup>1</sup>

Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi along with fifteen others was arrested for crossing the border and entering Transvaal without permits and sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour on September 23, 1913.

This Satyagraha was a sort of protest against the insult offered to Indian womanhood by a judgment delivered by Mr. Justice Searle of the Cape Supreme Court on March 14, 1913, in which his Lordship declared that all marriages were outside the pale of legal marriages in South Africa with the exception of such as were celebrated according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages. This terrible judgment thus nullified in South Africa, by one stroke of the pen, all marriages celebrated according to the Hindu, Mussalman and Zoroastrian rites.

The bravery of the ladies who went to jail in such a large number was simply remarkable. "They were all kept in Maritzburg jail, where they were considerably harassed. Their food was of the worst kind and they were given laundry work as their task." One of them was a mere skeleton when she was released.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Satyagrah in South Africa*, pp. 425, 426.

'Another returned from jail with a fever to which she succumbed within a few days of her release.'

Frequent jail-going shattered Kasturba's health irreparably. Deenabandhu Andrews, who saw her on release from jail in Natal, wrote: "These ladies returned from prison with their health in many cases utterly broken down in the hard prison life which they had been obliged to endure. Mrs. Gandhi suffered most of all, and when I saw her for the first time after her release, it seemed to me that she would be unable to get strong again, owing to her shattered health."

This was Shrimati Kasturba's first experience of jail life and that also in a foreign country. She stood well throughout all this ordeal. As for Gandhiji, he remained awfully busy during all these eight years in which he led the campaign of Satyagrah. During this struggle he courted imprisonment many times and underwent hardships like a true patriot. Once he went in a deputation to England with a view to represent the case of Indian settlers to the Imperial Government. The late Mr. Gopal Krishan Gokhale was so moved by the sufferings of his countrymen that even in his delicate health, he took the trouble of going to South Africa in 1911. The story of Satyagraha in South Africa is a history of promises made by the Union Government when they had no other alternative left and broken at the earliest convenience when the opportunity arose. But this struggle changed Gandhiji's future outlook of life. He emerged out a perfect leader who could command a large number of followers in a struggle of peculiar type.

Swami Bhawani Dayal gives his impressions about Kasturba in the following words:

"More than thirty-one years ago, the very day of

my arrival in the Union of South Africa, I saw Mata Kasturba for the first time at Phoenix, about fourteen miles from the famous city of Durban, on the north coast of Natal, in an Ashram, the abode of Mahatma Gandhi. In this Ashram the life would flow placidly and with a regularity broken only by an event of national upheaval. Every day was the same; settlers in the morning engaged in the printing press to produce a weekly journal in order to ventilate the grievances of the Indian community domiciled in South Africa and in the afternoon working hard to cultivate the soil and grow vegetables and fruit-trees of various varieties. When it was evening the settlers would meet in thanksgiving and prayer; and after the night's rest, another day of human duties would begin.

"The leader of this congregation was a spare figure—the hardest worker as well as the strongest man of the Ashram. Where the strength of youth failed he was called to the rescue! Verily he bore the brunt of the whole settlement. Dressed in shorts and a shirt made of Australian flour-sacks, having discarded the barrister's gown and a practice worth about Rs. 3,000 a year, Bapu was living the peasant's life.

The Phoenix Ashram was what one might call a laboratory in which Bapu made his experiments with truth along his life-partner Ba. In this Ashram I lived for a few months in 1914, after my release from prison, as the Hindi editor of the *Indian Opinion*, a weekly journal founded by Bapu in 1903. Here I saw a good deal of Ba, and the more I saw the more I liked her. Though she did not have the benefit of schooling, owing to her early marriage, she was more than a match to any educated person in her understanding, power of reasoning and national spirit in

fighting for our human rights in South Africa.

"After her release from prison, my wife fell seriously ill in Durban and the doctors who attended on her were unable to effect a cure. Bapu kindly invited her to Phoenix. To meet her at the station Bapu waited himself with a hand-cart. He very tenderly helped her into it, pushing the cart alone, having refused all assistance, a distance of two and a half miles back to the Ashram. Ba was entrusted with the work of looking after her and she actually saved her life by the tireless nursing, even though the health of Ba herself was almost shattered in the prison, and I can still remember what a distressing sight it was. After a week's treatment in which only mud plasters had been applied, my wife was able to walk about. In addition to his multifarious duties Bapu was also the 'medical officer' and Ba gladly helped him as a 'matron' of the Ashram.

"The memory of those days will ever remain fixed and fresh in any mind. My close association with Bapu and Ba in Natal changed the course of my life. I went there with an ambition to amass wealth and lead a comfortable life, but the day I saw Bapu and Ba at Phoenix a divine inspiration forced me instantly to dedicate my life to the cause of my countrymen abroad according to my own lights."





## VI

### BACK IN INDIA

*In undertaking to crush out the attempt of people long enslaved, to attain possession of itself, organise its own laws and government, and to be allowed to follow its internal destinies according to its own ideals, we are crushing out the grandest thing in the great human world...and we are helping to destroy faith in God and man.*

—Professor WILLIAM JAGGERS  
of Harvard University

When Gandhiji heard that Mr. Gokhale was seriously ill, he hurried to England, in order that he might serve him there. The Satyagraha struggle in South Africa had concluded. On July 18, 1914, he, his friend, Kallenbach, and wife and children sailed for England and arrived in London on August 6, having been declared two days before. At that time Gokhale was in Paris. He could not return to England because communications between Paris and London had been interrupted.

In England Gandhiji could not sit idle. When thousands of Britons were offering themselves to go to the war, he thought that Indians should do their power to lend a helping hand in the hour of the Empire's trial. He succeeded in organising Indian London into a Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Not only did he enroll himself, he also made his wife join the Corps, though she had just recovered from a very serious illness. So far as he himself was concerned



had but recently completed a trying fast for fourteen days and his strenuous duties in the Ambulance Corps resulted in an attack of pleurisy.

Gokhale had by that time returned to England and after a stay of a few weeks in London, left for India. In January, 1915, Gandhiji and Kasturba followed him.

Gokhale had arranged a grand reception in honour of Gandhiji and his love for his disciple was so great that in spite of his failing health he went from Poona to Bombay to receive him. Gandhiji stayed there for a few days during which many functions were held in his honour.

Having visited Poona and Rajkot, Gandhiji and Kasturba went to Shantiniketan. Continuing his tour

India Gandhiji visited Hardwar during the *Umbha Mela* and from there, on the invitation of Vami Shradhanand, he visited Gurukul Kangri.

Gandhiji also found time to visit Hrishikesh, Lakman Jhula and the Swarg Ashram. Kasturba was a constant companion during his tour.

It is of interest to mention here that the Government of India, in appreciation of Gandhiji's services in England during the Great War, conferred upon him the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal in the New Year's honours in 1915. Six years after when in 1920 he started his non-co-operation movement, Gandhiji returned the Medal to the Government.

While Gandhiji was in Poona, Gokhale tried to induce him to join the Servants of India Society but his suggestion did not meet with the Mahatma's approval. Had he joined the Society then, India perhaps would have presented a different phase of political

Gandhiji founded the Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmedabad on May 25, 1915, and Kasturba was admitted one of its first inmates. The life of the Ashram was modelled on the family system, with meals taken in a common kitchen. The rules of conduct to which the Ashramites subscribed included one which made it obligatory for them to take the oath of poverty.

The same year Gandhiji attended the annual session of the Indian National Congress in Bombay. In the following year the session was held in Lucknow where Gandhiji met a public worker from Bihar, who invited him to visit Champaran to see for himself the plight of the workers on the indigo plantations.

Early in 1917, while Gandhiji was on a visit to Cuttack, he went to Muzaffarpur and Motihari. The local authorities banned his entry. Gandhiji defied the order and was accordingly prosecuted. On April 18, the first day of his trial, Gandhiji filed a statement in the court, pleading guilty to the charge and setting out his reasons for the defiance of the ban. When the hearing of the case was resumed some days after, it came as a surprise to everyone that the prosecution was withdrawn and Gandhiji was at liberty to conduct his enquiry into the condition of the ryots.

Gandhiji now started the uplift of the workers in Champaran and called for volunteers, among the first number responding was Kasturba. Schools were opened in various places where rudimentary education was imparted and the villager was taught the benefits of cleanliness and elementary hygiene. Kasturba held charge of one school.

Gandhiji, who had intended to stay in Bihar for some time to consolidate the work that he had started,

had his attention diverted to the mill workers of Ahmedabad, whose troubles had become so acute that Gandhiji's early departure from Bihar became an immediate necessity. However, before his departure he succeeded in having an inquiry committee appointed. It was the report of this committee which culminated in the passing of a Bill, ameliorating to a great extent the condition of the workers on the indigo plantations in the Champaran area.

Meanwhile matters had come to a head in Ahmedabad and the millhands struck work. The stoppage lasted 21 days. Gandhiji led the movement. For a fortnight the striking operatives were strictly non-violent but subsequently attacks by them on "black-legs" caused Gandhiji to embark on a fast in order to bring about a more peaceful atmosphere. Attempts were made to arrive at a settlement between employers and workers and fortunately, Gandhiji gave up his fast after three days, the millowners having agreed to most of the strikers' demands.

With his many preoccupations, Gandhiji never lost sight of his Satyagraha Ashram. His tour of Bihar was punctuated by flying visits to the Ashram. During the mill strike, Gandhiji secured a piece of land near the Sabarmati Central Prison and the foundation of that world famous Ashram was laid.

The Indian National Congress held its annual session in Calcutta in 1917 and from it Gandhiji returned to Ahmedabad to take up the cause of the Kheda peasantry, who were almost starving in consequence of a failure of crops and the Government's apparent indifference to their sorry plight evidenced by their refusal to suspend the collection of land revenue. Gandhiji made every efforts to have the



peasants' wrongs redressed, and when all failed, he resorted to the potent weapon of Satyagraha. The peasants, despite many trials and tribulations, gave full support to the movement and the day came when to the satisfaction of all, the movement achieved success with the Government conceding the just demands of the Kheda peasants.

On April 26, 1918, the Viceroy called a conference in support of the War, then in its last year. Gandhiji attended the conference and it caused no little surprise throughout India when he supported resolutions in favour of recruiting for War services. Moreover, so strenuously did Gandhiji participate in the recruiting campaign that his health was affected and he contracted dysentery, which might have proved fatal, so virulent was the attack. Here are Gandhiji's own words on the subject :

" There was some festival that day, and although I had told Kasturba that I should have nothing for my midday meal, she tempted me and I succumbed. As I was under a vow of taking no milk or milk products, she had specially prepared for me a sweet wheaten porridge with oil added to it instead of *ghi*. She had reserved too a bowlful of *mung* for me. I was fond of these things, and I readily took them, hoping that without coming to grief I should eat just enough to please Kasturba and to satisfy my palate. But the devil had been waiting for an opportunity. Instead of eating very little I had my fill of the meal. This was sufficient invitation to the angel of death. Within an hour the dysentery appeared in acute form."

Not yet fully recovered from the consequences of the terrible disease, Gandhiji found that India stood

on the brink of grave dangers. In newspapers he read the report of the Rowlatt Committee. The Government of India, flying in the face of all advice, even of those who were their supporters, persisted in putting restrictions on even the semblance of the little liberty the people possessed and embodied the recommendations of the Committee in the Rowlatt Act. Gandhiji made a lightning tour of India and everywhere he found deep resentment against the measure. He tried to make the Government see reason and pointed out to them the potential dangers inherent in the enforcement of the Rowlatt Act. The Government were heedless to his warnings and the constitutional agitation for the repeal of the Act also having failed, he once again brought out from his armoury the weapon of Satyagraha, which on all occasions he had employed it, had proved successful if sometimes only partially.

Gandhiji gave fair warning to the Government by making an India-wide announcement of the launching of the campaign and declared March 30, 1919, as the day fixed for a *hartal* throughout the country. Circumstances intervened to necessitate the changing of the day of the "great strike" to April 6. The Government's action was swift and Gandhiji was arrested on April 8 at Palwal as he refused to obey the order banning his visit to the Punjab. The arrest of other public men left the people, now sullen and angry, without any leaders. The restraining influence of Gandhiji thus removed, the masses broke away from the strict tenets of non-violence enjoined on every Satyagrahi and in consequence the civil authorities were openly flouted and disturbances broke out in many cities. With the arch-satyagrahi in prison,

the movement was suspended. The great tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar) and firing in Delhi and other places are now matters of recent history and too fresh and painful in the minds of Indians to require mention in detail here. However, the atrocities perpetrated during the period of martial law regime in the Punjab could not be kept hidden from the people of India. The Government of India, now more alive to the dangers inherent in the situation, gave way before public pressure and appointed the Hunter Committee: while in the third week of October of that fateful year Gandhiji was allowed to visit the Punjab.

The people's temper was still at fever pitch and they would have none of the Hunter Committee, which was boycotted. Instead, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya formed an unofficial committee to collect evidence of the tragic happenings in the Punjab. This Committee not only made a sifting enquiry, but organised relief for the victims of Jallianwala Bagh firing and the martial law regime. The annual session of the Indian National Congress was held in Amritsar that year, with Pandit Motilal Nehru presiding. Kasturba also visited the Punjab.

The demand for the redress of the wrongs of the Punjab evoked no response from the Government. It was at this fateful period in India's history the Muslims were greatly agitated over the Khilafat question. At this time Gandhiji convinced Congressmen of the efficacy of non-violent non-cooperation in their fight for freedom and toured the country to make it popular among the masses. The country having been prepared, in September, 1920, Special Session of the Indian National Congress was

held in Calcutta and L. Lajpat Rai, who presided, had but recently returned home from many years of exile in America. By a preponderatingly large majority the session passed the resolution on non-violent non-co-operation, moved by Gandhiji himself. The Congress, at its annual session at Nagpur, in December, confirmed the resolution.

India at the beginning of 1921 had a change of Viceroy. Lord Chelmsford retired and Lord Reading assumed office, Lord Reading came to India with a great reputation. He had held the high office of the Lord Chief Justice of England during the critical days of the Great War (1914-1918), had been British Ambassador and Minister Plenipotentiary in the United States of America. In May, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya arranged a meeting between the Viceroy and the great leader of the non-co-operation movement. The same year H. R. H. the Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor) visited India when the Congress movement was at its height. Wherever the royal visitor went, he was greeted with *hartals*. The Government, in consequence, set their machinery into motion and once again wholesale arrests of Congress leaders followed. Mr. C. R. Das was elected President for that year's Annual Session of the Indian National Congress to be held in Ahmedabad. He was taken into custody and Hakim Ajmal Khan was elected in his place. The Congress at the headquarters of Gandhiji was an unqualified success. Kasturba took her due share in the work involved, helped the Reception Committee in its onerous task and rendered great aid in securing the comfort of the delegates, who had come from places far and near and represented every town or city of India.





## VII

### AN EVENTFUL DECADE

*To conquer with arms is to make only a temporary conquest ; to conquer the world by earning its esteem is a permanent conquest.*

—WOODROW WILSON

After the successful termination of the Ahmedabad Session of Indian National Congress, Gandhiji stayed for some days in the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati and reached Bombay on January 13, 1929 where a conference of the All Parties Leaders was to be held on the following day. Gandhiji took part in its deliberations but could not commit himself on behalf of the Congress. The Government also gave cold shoulder to the demands made by it. The arrest of workers and leaders, suppression of freedom of speech and association besides the campaign of repression started by the Government forced Gandhiji to start mass civil disobedience at Bardoli where all preparations had been made. With a view to give final touches, he left the Satyagraha Ashram on January 27. The women of the Ashram met him under the leadership of Shrimati Kasturba and took his directions about their duty in his absence. At the meeting of the Congress Working Committee held at Surat on January 31, he obtained the permission to start the movement from Bardoli. He sent his ultimatum to the Viceroy on the 1st of February and got a reply on behalf of the Government in the shape of a communique on the 6th in which the demands made by him were rejected. In the mee-

time, Mr. Jinnah and his colleagues of the Bombay Conference were making repeated representations and sending regular wires from January 16 but failed to elicit any reply from the Viceroy up to 30th when they were told that the Government was not prepared to summon the Round Table Conference.

Gandhiji sent his final ultimatum to the Viceroy on the 7th of February in which he intimated his intention to start the movement from the 12th. But God had willed otherwise. The newspapers received on the 8th morning brought the news regarding tragic happenings at Chauri Chaura and Gandhiji suspended the movement. As a penance he went on fast for 5 days which terminated on February 17th evening. When Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi got the news she hurried to Bardoli where she reached on the 15th along with Miss Anusuya Ben and Mrs. Santanam. For the rest of the time she was with Gandhiji to serve him. After that he visited Delhi where a meeting of the All India Congress Committee was held and in this meeting the decision of the Working Committee regarding suspension of the movement was confirmed. Though a storm of protest was raised against this step, Gandhiji remained adamant and defended his decision in his subsequent writings through the "Young India" and the "Navajivan."

Though the rumour of his impending arrest was in the air for the past so many weeks, but he was arrested on Friday the 10th of March at about half past ten at the Satyagraha Ashram. The leave-taking ceremony before his surrender took place as usual. Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi along with some inmates of the Ashram were permitted to accompany him to the Jail.

He was prosecuted along with Mr. Shanker Lal Banker in respect of 3 articles which he had published

in the "Young India" and sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment on March 18th. He remained in the Sabarmati Jail from 10th to the 20th of March, when at the dead of night he was removed from the Jail without any previous information. For two days after the removal nobody in the Ashram had any information about his whereabouts and "Ba passed those days almost in a state of living death," writes Shri Krishnadas in his book.<sup>1</sup> After that it was revealed through non-official sources that Gandhiji and Mr. Banker had been transferred to the Yerovada Jail near Poona. But this does not mean that the arrest and subsequent conviction of her husband made her give way to a sense of frustration. Not at all. Like a brave lady, she bore all this heroically. The appeal that she addressed to her countrymen and women on the eve of the incarceration of Gandhiji proves that she rose to the occasion. Not only did she encourage them, but gave proper lead by suggesting a constructive programme of activities to be carried on in the absence of the great apostle of Indian independence.

This is what she said :

"My dear countrymen and countrywomen,—

My dear husband has been sentenced today to 6 years' simple imprisonment. While I cannot deny that this heavy sentence has to some extent told upon me, I have consoled myself with the thought that it is not beyond our power to reduce that sentence and to release him by our own exertions long before his term of imprisonment is over.

"I have no doubt that, if India wakes up and seriously undertakes to carry out the constructive programme of the Congress, we shall succeed not only in releasing

<sup>1</sup> *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 405.

him, but also in solving to our satisfaction all the three issues for which we have been fighting and suffering for the last 18 months or more.

"The remedy, therefore, lies with us. If we fail, the fault will be ours. I, therefore, appeal to all men and women who feel for me and have regard for my husband to whole-heartedly concentrate on the constructive programme and make it a success.

"Among all items of the programme he laid the greatest emphasis on the spinning-wheel and khaddar. Our success in these will not only solve the economic problem of India in relation to the masses, but also free us from our political bondage. India's first answer, then, to Gandhiji's conviction should be that :

(a) All men and women give up their foreign cloth and adopt khaddar and persuade others to do so ;

(b) All women make it a religious duty to spin and produce yarn every day and persuade others to do so ; and

(c) All merchants cease trading in foreign piece-goods."

On January 12, 1924, Gandhiji was brought from Yerovada Jail to Sassoon Hospital, Poona and at about 10 p.m. was operated upon for appendicitis. He had passed all these 22 months in Jail while Shrimati Kasturba was looking after the Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati. She received the distressing news about Gandhiji's ailment and was very much upset. On Monday, the 14th of January, she along with Anusuya-Ben reached Poona and met her husband in the Hospital. She was allowed by the jail and the hospital authorities to remain with him so as to nurse him and for this purpose every facility was provided for her. Her sons Ramdas and Devadas reached

there one day after. In the meantime the Government was urged to release Gandhiji, and as usual they took their own time to reach a decision. The news regarding his unconditional release was conveyed to him at 8-55 a.m. on February 5, when he was still convalescing. The Government of Bombay announced that they have remitted the unexpired portion of his sentence of imprisonment. Two days after his release he wrote a letter to the late M. Mohd. Ali—the then President of the Indian National Congress—in which he expressed his sense of sorrow on his release due to serious ailment. He remained for some days more in the hospital.

After his release, he diverted his sole attention to the question of communal harmony. The riots that took place in various cities, the loss of life and the damage done to property—particularly in Saharanpur and Kohat—distressed him to such an extent that when he was in Delhi, he announced his decision on the 17th of September to go on fast for 21 days which terminated on the 8th of October. Shrimati Kasturba along with Shriyut Shanker Lal Banker, Miss Anusuya Ben and Shri Ramdas Gandhi reached Delhi on the morning of September 21, and remained with him and served him to the best of her ability throughout his fast.

The fast as it was meant to, diverted the attention of the whole country and its leaders to the problem of communal unity. On September 26, a Unity Conference was held at Delhi under the Presidentship of the late Pt. Moti Lal Nehru. M. Mohd. Ali was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The decisions arrived at the Conference were most important and far-reaching and were welcomed by all the well-

wishers of India. That year the annual session of the Indian National Congress was held in Belgaum over which Gandhiji presided. This made the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati the political capital of Nationalist India and in this capacity, it not only attracted the attention of the whole of India but the whole of the world.

In the Ashram, the most dominating personality next to Gandhiji was that of Shrimati Kasturba, who was called Ba, which literally means mother. This lady with a 'little form, flashing eyes, sharp voice and firmly set lips' used to have a sway over the domestic side of the Ashram and none could question her commands. She was not only sweet to a fault but if and when occasion arose, she could be hard also. In the kitchen allotted to her she had a hard job to perform because not only she had to cook and feed her great husband and grandsons but more than twenty inmates of the Ashram. She was not merely a supervisor but the chief cook upon whom fell the main burden of the work attached to the kitchen. Being herself regular, she could not tolerate laziness on the part of others and proved an exacting mistress.

Being in charge of her kitchen sometimes she had to serve food for the guests some of whom were many times unexpected ones. If on some such occasions Ba ever flared up, Gandhiji used to calm her down by saying that even he was afraid of her. One day he received some very distinguished guests including the late Pt. Motilal Nehru after lunch when Ba and her assistants had closed the kitchen, and being tired Ba had gone to her room nearby to take rest. After receiving the guests, Gandhiji wanted lunch to be ready for them. He himself went to the kitchen and instructed one of





the assistants to begin work without for the present disturbing Ba. He told them that she should only be sent for when her help became indispensable. He did not want to irritate her as she was feeling a little indisposed that day. After satisfying himself about the arrangements, he left the kitchen. While the assistants were working according to the plan and Gandhiji's instructions, a brass plate fell down on the floor with a clattering sound. Ba suddenly got up and thinking that a cat was there in the kitchen, came hurriedly towards it when to her utter surprise, she saw it open and the meal being prepared. On her enquiry she was told that Mahatmaji had instructed them to do like that. She then smiled and said in English, "Why I was not called? I am not so tired as you imagine."

When all the guests had left and Gandhiji was alone, she went to him and standing in front of him addressed him thus, "Why did you not tell me about the guests and ask me at once to get lunch ready? Do you think I am such a bag of bones?"

"Ba! Don't you know," replied Bapu, "I am afraid of you on such occasions"?

Ba smiled while her eyes seemed to express, "Why are you afraid of me"! But Gandhiji was not joking. He had spoken the truth and the fact was that in this world if Gandhiji was ever afraid of anybody, it was that person who was one nearest to him—his devoted wife.

On January 27, 1928, Ramdas Gandhi was married and in this connection a solemn ceremony was held at the Satyagraha Ashram. The engagement had taken place 2 years before. There was neither any music nor anything like a wedding party or dinner. From

Ahmedabad, some friends of Gandhiji's were present to bless the couple. 'No wedding gifts were presented except that of *mangala mala* of his own spinning, a copy of Bhagwad Gita, pair of *taklies* and Ashram Bhajanavali from Gandhiji,' wrote the late Mahadev Desai in the "Young India" while describing the wedding. The bride's mother presented a spinning wheel. It may also be mentioned that both the bride and the bridegroom were dressed in spotless white Khadi and neither had any gold or other ornament on her or his person. It was a most moving scene in Gandhiji's life. While blessing the couple Gandhiji delivered a memorable speech. Shrimati Kasturba must have felt proud to have such an ideal bride for her son and the apprehensions that she had had in South Africa, must have been removed.

In 1928 the Congress Session was held at Calcutta under the presidentship of Pandit Motilal Nehru, and was attended by Gandhiji along with other members of his party. In 1929, Pandit Jawahar Lal presided over the deliberations of the Congress Session held at Lahore. Gandhiji in the company of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru met the Viceroy on December 23, so as to know the attitude of the Government towards the Indian demand of Independence. As no satisfactory reply was forthcoming, the Congress announced its goal to be complete Independence. Shrimati Kasturba visited Punjab along with her husband and stayed at Lahore for a week or so in connection with the Congress Session. In the first week of January, the party returned to the Sabarmati Ashram.

## VIII

### SALT SATYAGRAHA

*I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. I am in earnest, I will not equivocate, I will not excuse, I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard.*

—WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

The Congress Working Committee held a meeting in Sabarmati Ashram on February 15, 1930, and Gandhiji was authorised to start what is popularly known as Salt Satyagraha. On March 1, he sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy through a young Englishman, Reginald Reynold, who delivered it to His Excellency on March 4. This ultimatum had been approved of by Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The Central Assembly was then in its Budget session.

The Government had also made its usual preparations. Gandhiji, with a band of selected volunteers, began on March 12 his march to Dandi to break the salt law. All provincial Congress Committees had been authorised to start Satyagraha on March 21 by defying the salt law. Gandhiji reached his objective at 8-30 a.m. on April 6 and his action at Dandi evoked from Sarojini Naidu: "Hail, law-breaker."

Mahatma Gandhi was taken into custody by the police the next day, but the campaign had been initiated and was already in full swing throughout India. The Government in their counter-measures had re-

course to their repressive machinery and promulgated various ordinances. In some places there were lathi charges and firing on satyagrahis while in Sholapur martial law was declared.

The Government after some time realising the futility of their repressive measures, were adopting a placatory attitude and were seeking the favour of those who did not directly support the action of the Congress and on May 12 the Viceroy announced that a Round Table Conference would be held in London and he called upon all parties in India to participate in its deliberations. The Congress leaders still out of prison did not approve of the move and the Sapru-Jayakar peace mission interviewed Gandhiji in Yerovada Jail on July 21 and also went to Naini Jail to see the Nehru father and son. Mr. Jayakar again met Gandhiji on July 31 and August 1. The result was that a meeting of leaders was held in Yerovada Jail on August 13 and 14 at which were present Gandhiji, the two Nehrus, Syed Mahmud, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, besides the two peace emissaries. The conference came to nothing as the Government were not prepared to concede the demand of the Congress leaders. The Government adopted more stringent measures and on August 25 declared the Congress Working Committee an unlawful association. Two days later Pt. M. M. Malaviya, Dr. M. A. Ansari and Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, who had resigned the speakership of the Central Legislative Assembly on April 25, and other members of the Working Committee were committed to prison by a Delhi Magistrate.

The fight between the Congress and the Government continued for about six months and the Round

Council to resign their seats as a protest against the Government's repressive policy. On June 20th Kasturba arrived in Delhi from Navsari on her way to Gujerat where her son was incarcerated in the Special Jail. Delhi flocked in its thousands at the railway station and accorded Kasturba a right loyal welcome. In a procession of over 20,000 she was escorted to the house of Shree Lakshmi Narain Gadodia where she stayed for the day.

The following day a public meeting was held in the Queen's Gardens. Shrimati Parvati Devi presided and there were 3,000 ladies present among the vast concourse of 25,000.

Kasturba made a straightforward, simple and emphatic speech in Hindustani, fervently appealing to the people to boycott foreign cloth, not to partake of alcoholic drinks and to join the non-violent fight for freedom. She also paid a tribute to the great work being done by lady volunteers. That night she left for Gujerat. The next morning Amritsar gave her a great welcome. In the evening a mile-long procession was taken out which passed through bazars gaily decorated with buntings and flags. Spectators threw flowers on the procession as it wended its way to Jallianwala Bagh where a mammoth meeting was held. Speaking in plain Hindustani, Kasturba said that communal disunity was an obstacle in the way of freedom. As a true Hindu wife she was carrying on the great work of her husband.

Later in the evening, Kasturba resumed her journey and reached Gujerat at 2 a.m. on June 23. Here she had a busy programme. In the morning she addressed a public meeting convened for and by ladies in which she exhorted them to take to spinning

After that she saw her son in the Special Jail. At about 1 p.m. she motored to Kunjah village to visit Mr. Pearey Lal's family. In the evening she was taken in a procession through the main bazars of Gujrat city. Some 7,000 ladies, all dressed in Khaddar, joined the procession singing national songs. After the procession a meeting was held at which an address of welcome was presented to her. In her reply, she said that the way in which they could honour their leaders was by carrying out their message and this they could do by discarding foreign cloth and liquor and using only Khaddar.

At six that evening she left for Meerut.

During the winter of that year she toured the villages in Borsad Taluqa where a no-tax campaign was being waged. Wherever she went large crowds greeted her. As a representative of her husband, she advised the people to endure all hardships cheerfully as Swaraj was fast approaching as a result of the great sacrifices of the people. She attended the annual session of the Indian National Congress which was held in Karachi in March 1931, with S. Vallabhbhai presiding. Its success was overshadowed by the execution of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, on the day Gandhiji with his party left Delhi for Karachi to attend the session.

By this time Lord Irwin had left India and Lord Willingdon had assumed the office of Viceroy. Gandhiji met him in Simla when it was decided that he would attend the second Round Table Conference which was to be held in London in the coming winter.

## IX

### JAIL LIFE—1

*"A new nation cannot be made solely by the skill of a great statesman playing on the mutual jealousies of Foreign Powers. The making of nations requires the self-sacrifice of thousands of obscure men and women who care more for the idea of their country than for their own comfort or interests, their own lives or the lives of those whom they love."*

—GEORGE MACAULAY TREVELYAN

Mahatma Gandhi might have prolonged his stay in England after the termination of the Round Table Conference but distressing news about the promulgation of ordinances and arrests reached him from the 'home front', and he hurried back to India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru described the conditions obtaining in the country at the time in the following words :

"Two days after our arrest Gandhiji landed in Bombay, and it was only then that he learnt of the latest developments. He had heard in London of the Bengal Ordinance, and had been much upset by it. He now found that fresh Christmas gifts awaited him in the shape of the U. P. and Frontier Ordinances, and some of his closest colleagues in the Frontier Province and the U. P. had been arrested. The die seemed to be cast, and all hope of peace gone, but still he made an effort to find a way out, and sought an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon for the purpose. The interview, he was informed from New Delhi,

could only take place on certain conditions—these conditions being that he must not discuss recent events in Bengal, U. P. and the Frontier, the new Ordinances and the arrests made under them, (I write from memory and have not got the text of the Viceregal reply before me.) What exactly Gandhiji or any Congress leader was officially supposed to discuss with the Viceroy, apart from these forbidden subjects—which were agitating the country, passes one's comprehension. It was absolutely clear now that the Government of India had determined to crush the Congress, and would have no dealings with it. The Working Committee had no choice left but to resort to civil disobedience. They expected arrest at any moment, and they wanted to give a lead to the country before their enforced departure. Even so, the civil disobedience resolution was passed tentatively, and other attempt was made by Gandhiji to see the Viceroy, and he sent him a second telegram asking for an unconditional interview. The reply of the Government was to arrest Gandhiji as well as the Congress President, and to press the button which was to let loose fierce repression all over the country. It was clear that whoever else wanted or did not want the struggle, the Government was eager and ever ready for it."<sup>1</sup>

Along with Sardar Patel, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested at 3-30 a.m. on 4th January, 1932, and was taken in a closed car to Yarowada Jail. The arrest was made under Regulation 35 of 1827 for "good reasons." Kasturba was with him at the time of his arrest. Gandhiji, in his usual way, bade farewell to all those present. The very day the Congress

<sup>1</sup> An Autobiography by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 321.



Working Committee was declared unlawful and four more ordinances were promulgated giving extraordinary powers to the police and the local authorities. Lord Willingdon wanted to rule India firmly and crush the political movement. Shrijut Vithalbhai Patel was also taken into custody. All over the country indiscriminate arrests were made. Not only were lathi charges common, even firing was resorted to at some places.

At a critical juncture like this in the history of the freedom movement of her country, how could Kasturba confine herself to the Satyagraha Ashram? She took no time to decide what role she was to play. She went out on tour and visited villages along with Miss Maniben Patel and addressed meetings there. She was arrested on the 11th of January in a village near Bardoli and was taken to the Sabarmati Jail. On the 15th, she was produced before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Almoula (Surat District) on a charge under section 17 (A) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. She and other ladies, who had been arrested along with her, declined to participate in the proceedings and remained silent spectators throughout the trial.

The prosecution evidence was led by the Superintendent of Police, who said that when he attached the Bardoli Satyagraha Ashram a few days ago, he found a letter, dated January 6, containing details of the Congress programme in the Bardoli Taluka. It contained Kasturba's projected visit in the company of Miss Maniben Patel and Mrs. Mithuben Petit. Having come to know that Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi and the party would reach Bardoli on the 10th of January, he deputed a constable to follow them. Later

he learnt that a procession was taken out and a meeting was held in the village of Syadha where Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi and others spoke, outlining the programme of Civil Disobedience movement. He then affected the arrests.

Kasturba was sentenced to one and a half months' simple imprisonment. The other members of the party were sentenced to a term of three and a half months' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 100 or two months' further imprisonment in case of default. All of them received the sentence with a perfect calm. Addressing the Magistrate Kasturba said: "Why this discrimination? Why only one and a half months' simple imprisonment for me? Do you want me to come again to teach my countrymen to receive lathi blows? I cannot bear coming out of Jail, leaving my daughters behind. Can't you award a similar sentence to me?"

The Magistrate, in reply, expressed his helplessness and told her that what was done, was done, and it could not be changed. She was ordered to be treated as an "A" class prisoner and given all the facilities including the supply of a vernacular daily paper, "Jam-i-Jamshed."

She cheerfully underwent the term of imprisonment in the Sabarmati Jail. She used to spin a lot and read a good deal. Five days after having been convicted, she came to know—and felt proud of it—that her son, Ramdas Gandhi, had been arrested at Surat on January 18th.

She was released on the morning of 29th of February. The first thing she did on coming out of the Jail was to put herself in touch with some young inmates of the Satyagraha Ashram at Bardoli, who had been left behind. On learning that they were doing

well she felt greatly relieved, though she had been robbed of her peace of mind. The very idea that her comrades and her husband were behind the prison bars was nothing short of a mental torture to her. But before courting arrest, she went to see her husband, who was lodged in the Yarowada Jail. On the 1st of March, Devdas Gandhi was convicted at Merrut and sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200.

She reached Ahmedabad on the 12th of March. The next day she left for Bardoli in the company of nine other ladies, presumably to carry on no-tax campaign and the boycott propaganda. On the 14th a procession was taken out. The processionists were asked by the police to disperse. On their refusal, all of them were arrested and produced before a magistrate, who sentenced Kasturba to six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200, or in default to undergo further imprisonment for a month and a half. One member of the party was fined Rs. 500 in addition to 6 months' imprisonment. The rest of the party were sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200 or, in default one month and a half each. All of them were ordered to be placed in "C" class. On the 17th she was brought from Bardoli to the Sabarmati Jail where she was lodged along with other political prisoners. This absurdity of classification gave rise to a wave of indignation in the country. If a person of the eminence of Kasturba was to be placed in "C" class and treated like an ordinary criminal, for whom was the "A" class meant, was the question on everybody's lips.

The country-wide agitation in the press and on the platform had its effect and immediately after her removal to the Sabarmati Jail, she was ordered to be

placed in "A" class. The Director of Information Bureau, in a communique issued to the press on March 17, said, "With reference to a report which has appeared in the newspapers that Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi was placed in "C" class by the trying magistrate it has been ascertained that telegraphic instruction correcting the classification to "A" have already been issued by the District Magistrate of Surat to the Superintendent of the Sabarmati Jail where Mrs Gandhi has been transferred."

The British Government announced the Communal Award on August 16, 1932. Gandhiji felt terribly agitated. He wrote a letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, the then Secretary of State for India, and threatened to go on fast from September 20 if the terms laid down in the Communal Award were implemented. When the correspondence was published on September 12, not only the whole country but the world was stunned. Mahatma Gandhi was offered conditional release but he declined to avail of it. When the authorities came to know of this, a statement was made on the floor of the Central Legislature that the Government would not release him. In the meanwhile, a Leaders Conference was held in Poona on September 19 under the presidentship of Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya with a view to coming to a settlement. After protracted deliberations, a settlement was arrived at to which the Mahatma gave his assent. But Gandhiji had embarked upon his grim ordeal on September 20 in the Yarowada Jail under the shade of a low mango tree. Kasturba Gandhi, who was at that time serving her term of imprisonment in the Sabarmati Jail, was brought to Yarowada Jail on September 22 so that she might be with her husband. With a view to avoidin

rush, she was asked to alight at the Kirkee railway station and taken to the Jail in a closed car. She was accompanied by Mr. C. W. Cordon the Superintendent of Police. Sitting at the feet of her husband, she remained with him and gave him her best and constant attention throughout the ordeal.

Mr. Pyarelal wrote then :

"On the 22nd, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi, whose sentence was due shortly to expire, was transferred from the Sabarmati Jail to Yarowada and permitted to attend on him. She was superb. Calm and collected as ever, she did not betray the slightest trace of agitation or grief. "Again, the same old story," she remarked as she greeted him with forced banter that could, however, hardly conceal what must have been to her a terrible ordeal of the soul. She promptly took charge of Gandhiji's little improvised nursing establishment."<sup>1</sup>

When the news that the leaders had come to a settlement was conveyed to Gandhiji, Shrimati Kasturba was there with him as also Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Sardar Patel. The decision was also conveyed to the Government of India and through her to the British Government, who gave their consent to it on September 26, when an announcement was made to that effect.

The Mahatma received the Prime Minister's reply at 4-15 p. m. on that day. He read it lying on the cot under the shade of the tree for some time and then passed it on to a friend, who read it. The late Poet Rabindranath Tagore had also by that time reached Poona. He sang a song from his Gitanjali. Those present then sang Gandhiji's favourite Ashram hymn. Mrs. Kamla Nehru then crushed two sweet lime fruits

<sup>1</sup> Epic Fast, p. 49.

into a glass which Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi handed to Mahatma Gandhi with a slightly unsteady hand. At 5 o'clock in the evening on Monday, 26th of September, the fast which had very much agitated the minds of all people terminated successfully.

On September 29, all interviews with Gandhiji were stopped. Even Kasturba Gandhi was separated from him. On September 30 only four days before the expiry of her term of imprisonment she was released. But as the Mahatma was very weak and needed constant nursing, she was again sent for and allowed to stay with him for some days. Here it may be mentioned that Shri Devadas Gandhi, who had been released from the Jail on August 1, due to sickness, was not allowed to see his father, when all interviews with Gandhiji were stopped.

After staying for some days in the Ashram, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi arrived in Madras on November 29, with a view to touring the Presidency. She was received at the station by a large number of people and was profusely garlanded. In the evening a public meeting was held at Triplicane on behalf of a number of Associations including the Madras Harijan Seva Sang and the Women's Association and addresses were presented to her. In her joint reply, she stressed the need of placing the abolition of untouchability first on the national programme. She appealed to the audience to remove all social disabilities experienced by the Harijans. Next day she left for Calicut. She visited Andathode, about 12 miles from Guruvayoor. The party proceeded by boat to Andre and was received by a number of ladies and gentlemen. A palanquin was kept ready for Shrimati Kasturba but, as she had conscientious objection to using the same, the whole



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party proceeded on foot to the meeting place. After one week's intense campaign in Ponnani Taluk in connection with the referendum, Kasturba Gandhi and other members of the party returned to Calicut on the night of December 8. On the 13th she arrived in Bangalore and addressed a public meeting. A certificate of appreciation was presented to her. After visiting other places where she delivered speeches, she returned to Gujarat.

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### INDIA—A TEST CASE

I have been brought to the conviction that India has become an immediate test case for world democracy in the eyes of all darker peoples everywhere. At this moment freedom can be declared only in India. Millions in China, in South America, in North America, in the Isles of the Oceans, in Africa and even in Europe, are watching to see if democracy means what it says and if the four freedoms are true or false.

—Mrs. PEARL BUCK



## X

### JAIL LIFE—2

*No man is good enough to rule another man, and no nation is good enough to rule another nation. For a man to rule himself is liberty, for a nation to rule itself is liberty. But for either to rule another is tyranny. If any nation robs another nation of its freedom it does not deserve freedom for itself, and under a just God it will not long retain it.*

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi was arrested on Saturday, February 4, 1933, in the village of Ras. Accompanied by six other ladies, she made an attempt to hold a "dictators' conference" in the village. About 100 local women assembled at a place. As they emerged in a procession from a street corner, raising Congress slogans, they were stopped by the police officer in charge of the special police force stationed at the village for the protection of the crops on the confiscated fields. Kasturba Gandhi and six other women were taken into custody while other members of the procession were dispersed. The arrested women were taken to Borsad where they were locked up in the police station.

The trial commenced on February 7. The court room of the First Class Resident Magistrate was packed to capacity. The complainant, Mr. Kamar Ali Valimiya, the sub-inspector of police at Kathana police station, in the course of his deposition, said that in furtherance of the programme of the

Borsad Taluka Congress Committee, which had been declared an unlawful association, a conference of "dictators" of various Congress sub-committees of Borsad Taluka (also declared to be an unlawful association) was to be held in the village of Ras. They led a procession of about 100 women at about 8 a.m., shouting Congress slogans. They wore badges of dictators of various sub-committees, Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi having the badge of the President of the conference. The ring-leaders were arrested while other processionists were dispersed.

He added that all the accused, with the exception of Kasturba Gandhi, also carried on unlawful activities as dictators of various sub-committees. They were touring the villages and inciting villagers to join the civil disobedience movement, break Government laws and refrain from paying any notified liabilities to the Government.

All the accused who pleaded not guilty refused to take part in the proceedings. They described 'national service' as their profession.

The magistrate framed charges against Kasturba Gandhi under section 17 (A) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and against other women under section 17 (B) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Kasturba Gandhi declared that, as President of the conference, she had committed a greater offence and therefore, she should also be charged under section 17 (B) as the other women were.

The husband of one of the accused women applied to the court for the release of his wife on bail but when asked by the court if she wanted release, she refused to be bailed out.

Next day the magistrate pronounced the judgment

Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 500 or, in default, to six weeks' further imprisonment. The other women were sentenced to 1½ years' imprisonment and fine of Rs. 200 each. Kasturba Gandhi was ordered to be placed in "A" class while other women were all recommended for "C" class.

They were all brought to Sabarmati Jail on February 9. Miss Miraben was also brought there from the Arthur Road Jail, Bombay.

This was the time when efforts were being made by influential leaders to restore normal conditions in the country.

Mysterious are the ways of Gandhiji. The working of his inner self is not known, sometime not even to his best friends. When he decides to take a step, no power on earth can prevent him from his resolve. It was on April 30, 1933, that Mahatma Gandhi's determination to go on 21 days' fast from May 8 was made known to the public. The fast was to be observed with a view to purify himself, he declared. The Government ordered his unconditional release on the first day of his fast and, accordingly, he was taken to Parnakuti, the bungalow owned by Lady Thackersey.

Five days later, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi was released from Sabarmati Jail. Ramdas Gandhi received her at the jail gate and brought her to the Sabarmati Ashram. She was in perfect health, though she had been living on fruit and milk diet since the commencement of the fast by Gandhiji. After her release she was persuaded by her friends to agree to resume her normal diet. Accompanied by Hira Lal, Gandhiji's eldest son, she reached Parnakuti on May 14. She alighted at Talegaon where she was met by Lady Thackersey,



Gandhiji's hostess at Parnakuti. She looked pale and perturbed. It was Gandhiji's day of silence. The party, after alighting from the train, went straight to Parnakuti in a car. Mahatma Gandhi also desired to see and talk to her before the commencement of his weekly silence. For the last three days he had been anxiously enquiring about her. As soon as she reached the bungalow, she was conducted to the place where Gandhiji lay. The mother and the son looked worried over Gandhiji's fast. Hurriedly she climbed up the flight of steps. The Mahatma greeted her with a smile. Both of them were immensely happy and soon began chatting about the Satyagraha Ashram and other allied topics.

Next day the Associated Press of India sent out the following message :

"Asked by pressmen whether there were any emotional scenes when Ba saw Gandhiji lying on his couch, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu laughed and said: "Emotional scenes? Of course not. But why should there be any at all? They were married these fifty years or more. Trained and disciplined by Mahatma Gandhi himself for years, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi is quite used to such things and she can well bear the greatest of ordeals as a matter of course."

Henceforth she remained most of the time with Gandhiji and was very seldom seen outside Parnakuti. On May 16, she engaged herself in a lively conversation with Lady Thackersey. When approached by press representatives for an interview regarding Mahatma Gandhi's health, she smilingly exclaimed: "What can I say? In the circumstances, he is quite all right. He talks little, but his voice is quite clear though low."

"Do you hope he will pull through the fast?" enquired a press man.

"God's will be done and I have fullest faith in Him," was Shrimati Kasturba's reply.

Soon after the prayer time was announced and she rose abruptly remarking: "I should now join the prayers."

This fiery ordeal of 21 days ended on May 29, 1933, when at 12-30 noon Gandhiji broke his fast by taking half a glass of orange juice which was given to him by Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi. On that day she was in an excellent mood and her heart was full of joy over the successful termination of the fast. She stood near Mahatma Gandhi's head, wreathed in smiles when prayers were being offered. Her eyes were sparkling when she took the glass and offered it to Gandhiji. Her joy was boundless on this memorable occasion. In commemoration of the happy ending of the fast she planted a mango tree of the best Alfanso variety in front of Parnakuti.

Her innermost feelings can well be gauged by the following message which she gave on that day:

"I am deeply thankful for the successful termination of the fast. God has heard the prayers of the nation. I am grateful especially to my sisters in India and abroad, who have joined with me in continuous prayers. While I rejoice to-day, it would be a great joy if Harijans are soon restored to a fuller life in the Hindu society than is at present permitted to them."

She also had been observing fast since May 28 and it was broken only after Gandhiji had broken his.

How deeply she was respected by Mussalmans will be clear by the following story. A Mussalman from Bombay sent to her on May 29 a pair of bangles



and the auspicious kumkum, with a sweet little letter worded thus : "I send you these humble gifts with a prayer that you may wear this token of good luck ever."

Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi gratefully accepted the kind gift and even Gandhiji was deeply touched when he heard about it.

In the first week of June, the engagement of Devadas with Miss Lakshmi, daughter of Shri Rajagopalachariar was announced. Lakshmi came to Poona on June 11 and the marriage was celebrated on June 16 at 6-30 a.m. Mahatma Gandhi and Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi presented to the couple garlands of hand-spun yarn.

In the meantime, Mr. M. S. Aney, the President of the Indian National Congress, in consultation with the Mahatma, suspended, for the second time, the civil disobedience movement up to July 31. The first suspension was announced on May 8 when Mahatma Gandhi was released.

With a view to recoup his health and take more rest, Mahatma Gandhi remained in Parnakuti for some time more. Kasturba was also there to look after him.

In the meantime, a meeting of Congress leaders from all over India was held on July 12 and 13, 1933, in Tilak Mandir, Poona, over which Mr. Aney presided. Though too weak, Gandhiji took part in the deliberations and delivered a speech in which he explained his position. On July 18, along with Shrimati Kasturba and other members of the party, Mahatma Gandhi left Poona for Ahmedabad where he reached the next day. As he had resolved not to return to Sabarmati Ashram, the party was taken to



Seth Ranchoddas's bungalow. On July 21, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi in the company of Mahatmaji went to Sabarmati Jail where they interviewed Miss Miraben.

On July 31, Mahatma Gandhi issued a statement in which he announced his decision of marching to the village of Ras along with 33 companions. In case the party reached there, they intended to go further. He disbanded the Sabarmati Ashram. By evening the Ashram was practically vacated. When the evening prayer was held on that day, Mahatma Gandhi addressing those who had assembled there said : "For the last 18 years we tried to serve the people through the Ashram and now for doing the same service the Ashram is being disbanded. Its revival depends on your will that the Ashram is to live longer. Uptil now the inmates of the Ashram had a joint responsibility, but now each inmate will constitute a separate Ashram and bear the responsibility of the Ashram."

Before leaving the Ashram that night Mahatma Gandhi conferred with the members of his batch for about 45 minutes when he asked them to continue the march till the last of the batch was left, even if he (Gandhiji) were arrested at the outset. Shrimati Kasturba, a member of the batch, listened to Gandhiji's advice with rapt attention. At that time she was seen ready with her kit to march.

Mahatma Gandhi was arrested under section 3 of the Special Emergency Powers Act on August 1 at 1-40 a.m. along with Kasturba Gandhi and other members of his batch who were to march to Ras. The arrest was made at the bungalow of Seth Ranchoddas at Ahmedabad. It is stated that the District Magistrate, the District Superintendent of



Police, and other police officers proceeded to the bungalow at 1-30 a.m. in four motor cars to effect arrests. In anticipation of some sensational happenings a small crowd had gathered in the compound since the evening. The crowd on seeing the police party raised slogans and rushed to the rooms where Mahatma Gandhi, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi and other members of the party were sleeping. On hearing the slogans they woke up. After the usual prayers and the singing of Ashram hymns, Mahatma Gandhi, followed by Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi and Shri Mahadev Desai, came down when all of them were arrested. Mahatma Gandhi was seated in the car of the District Superintendent of Police and Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi and Shri Mahadev Desai were accommodated in the car of the Deputy Superintendent of Police and taken to the Sabarmati Jail. Shrimati Kasturba was kept as an "A" class prisoner in the women's ward.

India's horizon was once again clouded with gloom as a result of these arrests. The people's protest was visible in the shape of simultaneous hartals all over the country.

While Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi was kept in Sabarmati Jail, where Mr. Devadas Gandhi interviewed her on Thursday, August 3, Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Mahadev Desai were removed to the Yerowada Jail on August 2. He was released on August 4 at 9 in the morning and was served at 9-5 a.m. with a notice from the District Magistrate, Poona, under section 4 of the Bombay Special Powers Act, requiring him to quit the Jail premises and remain within the limits of Poona city. He defied this notice forthwith and was re-arrested at 9-50 a.m. He was tried in the court of Mr. H. S. Israel, Additional District Magistrate.

and sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment. The trial was held in the jail premises and the Mahatma pleaded guilty to the charge.

Shrimati Kasturba, along with 15 other ladies, was released at 9-15 a.m. on Monday, August 7, 1933, from Sabarmati Jail. All of them were served with notices by the District Magistrate under section 16 (1), read with section 14 of the Bombay Special Powers Act, which required them to abstain from all acts in furtherance of the civil disobedience movement or from any acts prejudicial to the public safety or peace and to remove themselves from the Sabarmati Jail and proceed forthwith to the area on the right bank of the River Sabarmati between the Satyagraha Ashram and the village of Kocharab Paldi and reside there.

The notices were read to the ladies by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Khan Bahadur Nadir Shah, who asked them what their intentions were. They replied that they did not want to comply with the notices served on them and would not remove themselves to the area to which they had been interned. As Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi and other ladies did not leave the Sabarmati Jail, they were re-arrested at about 10-30 a.m.

Next day, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi's trial under section 14 of the Bombay Special Powers Act for a breach of the District Magistrate's notice served on her was conducted before the City Magistrate, Mr. M. I. Sheikh in the premises of the Sabarmati Jail. A small crowd, including some press representatives, was permitted to attend the trial.

Clad in a white Khaddar Saree, she was brought out of the jail exactly at 8 a.m. by the D. C. ...



to sit on.

The prosecution story was opened by Mr. Bapalal sub-inspector of police. He said that he served a notice on her and clearly explained to her its contents. She was given ten minutes more than the time specified in the notice to remove herself from the prohibited area.

While another sub-inspector was giving evidence corroborating the first witness, she interrupted him by saying that she understood the contents of the notice properly, otherwise she would not have stayed in the prohibited area. The court called for the witness again who re-iterated that the contents of the notice had been explained to her.

The Deputy Superintendent of Police, Khan Bahadur Nadir Shah, deposed that he told her that she would be arrested if she did not leave the limits of the jail precincts and go to the place of her internment within an hour. He offered her a motor bus if she wanted to go, but she declined and said that she wanted to defy the notice of the District Magistrate and commit a breach thereby.

She refused to cross-examine any witness and did not take part in the proceedings. Only when the court asked about her profession, she laughed and said "Don't you know it?"

Asked by the court whether she had anything to say, she replied in the negative. She acted in defiance of the notice, having fully known the contents of the notice and the consequences of its breach. On a further question by the court, she pleaded guilty.

The Magistrate accordingly framed charges against her.

The trial of the other ladies was held when the trial

pronounced by the Magistrate who found all of them guilty and convicted them. Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi was sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment. The Magistrate placed her in the "A" class.

This time Mahatma Gandhi was not allowed the same facilities in the jail as he had enjoyed before to do the Harijan work. He could neither see visitors freely nor send and receive correspondence in this connection. He felt very much handicapped. As he loved his work more than his very life and was ready to lay it down for it, he went on a fast unto death on August 16 (Wednesday), as a protest against the restrictions. He had already informed the authorities concerned with the result that the Government agreed to his demand to some extent but did not restore the 'status quo'. He, therefore, commenced his fast.

Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi, accompanied by another lady prisoner, was removed from the Sabarmati Jail on the night of 19th and was taken to Poona in a second class bogie. On the 20th afternoon, she was taken in a taxi from the Poona railway station to the Yerowada Jail. She had hardly been with the Mahatma for about half an hour when he commenced his day of silence. She was taken to the women's jail opposite the Central prison. Next day (August 21) at about 4-30 p.m. she was released unconditionally. Mr. Mathuradas Tricumji received her at the Jail gate. Gandhiji had already been removed to the Sassoon Hospital and she looked worried.

When she came out of the jail she was greeted by pressmen. She made anxious inquiries regarding Gandhiji's health. She went straight to the hospital

Mahatma at night, she used to visit and stay with him in the hospital every morning and evening for some hours.

On August 23, at about 3-45 p.m. the Mahatma was informed that the Government had released him unconditionally. Thereupon, he broke his fast. Only Mr. C. F. Andrews who was at that time in the hospital came to know of it. When free, Gandhiji expressed his desire to be taken to Parnakuti. Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi who was unaware of his release crossed the van taking Gandhiji to Parnakuti, halfway up and went towards the hospital. But the detective in the ambulance van saw her and stopping the van shouted to Shrimati Kasturba's car to stop. Mr. Mathurdas Tricumji was also with her. A few yards away her car stopped and she hurried back. After exchanging a few words with Mr. Andrews, she proceeded ahead of the van to make arrangements to receive her husband at Parnakuti. By the time the ambulance climbed up the Parnakuti Hill, the party, consisting of Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi, Miss Miraben, Lady Thackersey and Mr. Mathuradas, were ready at the portico to welcome the Mahatma back to Parnakuti. He was slowly moved to a stretcher that had been procured and was carried up the marble steps to his old place.

It was when Gandhiji was released that people learnt that since he commenced his fast, Shrimati Kasturba had been living on a reduced diet, often restricting herself to a glass of fruit juice.

Kasturba remained at Parnakuti looking after Gandhiji's health up to September 15 when, along with a her husband, she came to Bombay where they stayed for week. On September 23, they reached Wardha where



Gandhiji passed a couple of weeks to take complete rest before proceeding on an All-India tour which he meant to undertake for collecting funds for the uplift of Harijans.

On October 2, Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi attended a meeting held in Nagpur under the presidentship of Dr. N. B. Khare in connection with Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. An address of welcome was presented to her in a silver casket on behalf of women, who expressed their appreciation of the services she had rendered to her country in association with Gandhiji, India's acknowledged leader.

In a brief reply Kasturba appealed to women to discard foreign-made goods and urged them to buy swadeshi articles in accordance with Gandhiji's teachings.

Mahatma Gandhi commenced his tour from Wardha on November 7, 1933, for the collection of funds for the uplift of Harijans as well as for doing propaganda against untouchability. Early in the morning he started from the Wardha Ashram along with Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, followed by Mr. A. V. Thakkar, Mr. Gangadhar Rao Deshpande and others. At first they visited some villages and then towns and cities in the Central Provinces. At some places the opponents tried to disturb the meetings, but at most of the places that he visited his mission was a success. Everywhere he met with a good response so far as the collection of fund for Harijans was concerned. A large number of temples were thrown open to Harijans.

Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi, along with Miss Maniben Patel, daughter of Sardar Patel, and Mr. Parjibha Desai, an old colleague of Mahatma Gandhi, were

arrested on the afternoon of November 28, 1933, at the Nadiad railway station while they were proceeding by train from Ahmedabad to Ras. As soon as the train steamed in, two uniformed police officers with half a dozen policemen in plain clothes, stepped into the compartment. They were put under arrest and taken by a motor bus to Anand where they were produced before the District Magistrate. Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi stated before the magistrate that they were proceeding to Ras where they intended to carry on Congress propaganda. They had already informed the authorities about it. Thereupon the district magistrate served them with notices under the Bombay Special Powers Act, requiring them to abstain for a period of one month from preaching the non-payment of taxes or the defiance of laws and all other acts calculated to further the civil disobedience movement and remove themselves forthwith from the limits of Kaira District by the first available train. As none of them complied with the notices, they were re-arrested.

On the next day an adjournment motion was moved in the Calcutta Corporation to protest against Shrimati Kasturba's arrest.

While Miss Maniben Patel was sentenced to 15 months' rigorous imprisonment for defying the notice, the case against Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi was withdrawn by the Government, but she was ordered to complete her previous sentence which the Government had suspended at the time of Gandhiji's fast in August last. She was, therefore, brought to the Sabarmati Jail again so that she might undergo the remaining period of her sentence. She was released on May 16.

## XI

### HARIJAN UPLIFT.—1

*If you have an opportunity, I wish you would extend to Mr. Gandhi my high appreciation of what his life has meant to the world. He has helped the people of India to find their souls in an age when it is becoming more urgently necessary than ever before that we should find a way of solving vital human problems by methods of peace. Mr. Gandhi has been a pioneer in showing how these more peaceful methods may be effective.*

—PROF. ARTHUR H. COMPTON  
(University of Chicago).

Gandhiji had been on tour for collecting Harijan uplift fund during the months which Kasturba passed in jail. By the time she was released he had already visited some of the provinces and collected a large amount. This tour infused a new life in the country and wherever he went, he was given a warm reception. But there was a section of orthodox Hindus who had been misguided by the propaganda carried on by some self-seekers against Gandhiji's activities for the uplift of depressed classes. They took up cudgels against the great leader. Losing all sense of fairplay and lacking foresight, they thought of putting an end to the most precious life in the country and to achieve their objective they made two consecutive attempts which fortunately proved abortive.

In the third week of June, Mahatma Gandhi



came to Poona where he was to receive a civic address. On June 24, a bomb was thrown from a balcony at the entrance of the Municipal building at 7-23 p.m., only 7 minutes before the arrival of Gandhiji to attend the function. About half a dozen persons were injured. The Mahatma went through the scheduled programme quite unruffled and unperturbed.

Another attempt was made a few days later when Gandhiji was on his way to Bombay from Poona. The miscreants tried to derail the train in which he was travelling. Near the Kamshet railway station, they placed two iron bars, a set of brackets used for keeping rails in position at the Diamond Cross lines, on both up and down lines. Thank God, the patrolman detected the obstruction. The River Indrani runs very close to the railway line and if the mischief had not been detected in time and the derailment had occurred, the consequences would have been terrible. The Almighty, in His inscrutable ways, protected the Mahatma, as he is to serve humanity through achieving freedom for India.

After some days' rest Gandhiji again went on tour for Harijan fund. Accompanied by Shrimati Kasturba, he reached Ajmer on July 5. Here he collected funds for Harijans and addressed a public meeting at which some trouble took place and a Sanatanist leader, Pandit Lal Nath, was injured in the scuffle. The following day he left for Beawar by car on his way to Karachi where he reached on the 7th. During the 4 days he stayed in Karachi he had to undergo a very crowded programme. The Corporation presented him a civic address and at this function Shrimati Kasturba was also present.

It was at Karachi that Mahatma Ghandhi announced his decision to undertake a fast for a week on his return to Wardha. He wanted to expiate the injury caused to Pandit Lal Nath at Ajmer. At a press conference on July 11, to a question if Shrimati Kasturba felt uneasy at his fast, he replied: "In such matters she never argues with me. She allows me to have my way. I feel she has felt great distress, but although she is my consort, I will not hesitate saying that she is the bravest I have ever met."

On the morning of the 11th of July, accompanied by Shrimati Kasturba and other members of the party, Gandhiji left Karachi for Lahore and reached the capital of the Punjab the next day at 8-45 p.m. when he was accorded a right royal welcome. At Lahore he stayed for 5 days at the Lajpat Rai Bhavan. Here the Mahatma and Kasturba addressed meetings, received addresses, collected funds for the uplift of Harijans, visited the *bastis* where Harijans live and met Congress workers, including those from the North-West Frontier Province.

On July 13, a special function was arranged in honour of Shrimati Kasturba outside Mori Gate Lahore, by the ladies of the province. She was presented a silver pot and an address of welcome was read by Mrs. L. R. Zutshi. Amidst thundering shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" and "Mata Kasturba ki Jai" she rose to reply. She said: "The condition of Harijans is most deplorable. They pass their lives in dirty and dingy houses and have not enough to eat and wear. I appeal to you, the caste Hindu women of the Punjab, not to hate Harijans but to treat them as your kith and kin."

To serve Harijans is to serve God. You should therefore, obliterate the distinction between high and low. To raise the poor and the lowly is great virtue and it brings man nearer to God. God loves those who love the poor and depressed."

Proceeding, she exhorted the women to put on Khaddar. She regretted very much that women in the Punjab were more fond of foreign cloth than the women in any other province. They should bid good-bye to foreign fineries and help the poor villagers by taking to Khaddar and save India's wealth from going to foreign countries. The use of foreign articles was mainly responsible for the strengthening of the chains of India's subjection and women would be doing a great service in the cause of Indian freedom if they used Khaddar and other Swadeshi articles.

Before the meeting terminated a handsome amount was collected for the Harijan fund.

On the morning of the 16th she left, in a car for Dinanagar where she was to perform the opening ceremony of Rambhuj Dutt Bhavan. On her way, she halted at Gurdaspur for a couple of hours. She reached there at 10 a.m. In the Arya Samaj Mandir a huge public meeting was held. Addressing those present she enjoined upon them to wear Khaddar and lead a simple life. She stressed the need of working for the uplift of Harijans. "You should pay visits to their quarters", she said, "with a view to studying their life, their needs and their difficulties. If you love Mahatma Gandhi, you should show your love by loving his mission." When she appealed money poured in from all sides.

It was the 17th of July when at night the party left for Delhi on their way to Calcutta where they

reached on the 19th. The sojourn was very short. They arrived at Cawnpore on July 22 and stayed there for 5 days. On July 27, the party reached Benares, where after a crowded programme of 4 days the tour ended on July 31. Gandhiji in this tour collected more than 8 lacs of rupees for the uplift of Harijans. This work is being done, since then by the All-India Harijan Sewa Sangh, through its provincial branches.

Here I may mention that a meeting of the Congress Working Committee was held at Benares on July 27, when the decision regarding the attitude of the Congress about the Communal Award was confirmed. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mr. M. S. Aney who did not agree to this policy, resigned from the Congress.

From Benares Gandhiji went to Patna on August 2, and having stayed there for only 2 days left for Wardha on the 4th, where he reached the next day. As he had announced, the Mahatma commenced his fast on August 7 at 6 in the morning.

As usual this fast was a cause of much worry and anxiety to Shrimati Kasturba. Not only did she keep constant vigil and served the Mahatma as a true and devoted wife, but she tried also to cheer up those who were by the side of the great leader throughout this ordeal.

The fast terminated successfully on the morning of August 14 at 6-20. In this connection, a simple ceremony was held in the Ashram. In view of the fact that the Mahatma was to break his fast, people began collecting at 5-30 a.m. After singing Gandhiji's favourite hymns and prayers, Kasturba handed to Gandhiji a glass of honey which he slowly sipped.



## XII

### HARIJAN UPLIFT—2

*True religion is a great beautifier of the face because it creates love and trust in the soul. Pity and kindness are great beautifiers. Hope is a magnificent beautifier. Courage tends to mould into lives of high dignity and charm. Faith, trust, and reverence are all wonderful transformers of countenance, because they transform the soul. If we carry our burdens and cares and sins to God and let Him lift them from our hearts and consciences, the joy that comes cannot fail to show itself in our looks.*

—J. T. SUNDERLAND

As President-elect of the Punjab Provincial Akhila Udhhar Conference Kasturba reached Amritsar and was taken through the city in a magnificent procession on the evening of March 21, 1936. A large number of Harijans from Amritsar, as well as various districts joined the procession. At the fag-end of the procession were two cars, in one of which was Kasturba Gandhi. The procession vended through the gaily decorated bazaars of the city, the route being lined on both sides by large and enthusiastic crowds which cheered vociferously as they had a glimpse of hers.

At many places Kasturba and the leaders were garlanded and flowers were showered on them from the balconies of houses. The procession terminated at the Jallianwala Bagh late in the evening, when under a huge Shamiana tastefully decorated and in the

presence of a large number of people, including several prominent leaders and citizens, the conference was opened by Goswami Ganesh Dutt, General Secretary of the Punjab Sanatan Dharam Pritinidhi Sabha.

After the welcome address by Lala Rup Lal Puri, chairman of the Reception Committee, Kasturba Gandhi rose, amidst great applause and cheers, and read her presidential address in simple Hindustani. As her voice was not audible to the whole gathering, the address was read by Miss Jammalal Bajaj. In the course of her address, Kasturba said :

"The Harijan movement has become part and parcel of our life. It is now deeply impressed on our hearts that we cannot move a step forward on the path of truth and *Dharma* by keeping untouchability with us. Fortunately, this problem is not so acute in the Punjab as it is in some other provinces, particularly in Southern India. Endeavours have been made from time to time for the removal of this curse. The Sikh Gurus allowed their followers to drink the nectar of equality, Swami Ram Tirath preached his message of love for all. Guru Nanak never allowed for a moment considerations of high and low caste to sway him. The Arya Samaj also did good work in this direction according to its own light. That is why the problem is not so complicated here as you see it in other parts of India. But you cannot say that untouchability has been completely wiped out from the Punjab. We have been able to shake the roots of untouchability, but have not succeeded in eradicating it. The sin of untouchability is not an ordinary sin. We can only cleanse ourselves from this great sin by service and sacrifice, but the service has to be selfless. Mahatma Gandhi declared time and again that there



is nothing political in this movement ; it is purely service of humanity ; an expiation of a great sin. True and selfless service is true devotion to our ancient religion.

"I feel pained when I hear that every one wants to convert Harijans with a view to having them in a particular fold. These endeavours are not truly religious. All religions equally preach the greatness of truth. There must be no use of force. Every one of us has a right to serve the poor and the down-trodden but overpowered by greed, it is no man's right to seize another's property and make it his own.

"The man who changes his religion for mundane gains cannot find solace in the religion he adopts. We are not concerned about other religions. We have got to look to our own shortcomings and drawbacks. If we can but purify our souls, the Hindu *Dharma* will be free from this curse, and nobody will ever think of leaving the fold of this purified religion. Whosoever follows this religion will not discriminate between Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs because this discrimination is after all another form of untouchability. This is the reason why I feel that service of Harijans will cut at the roots of communalism.

"It is satisfactory to note the Punjab's efforts in the Harijan movement. The province has hitherto contributed about Rs. 5,500 for the *Pani* Fund opened by the Harijan Sewa Sangh. In this direction our indefatigable sister, Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru has done sufficient work. Her noble example of zeal and service should be followed by others. But the water trouble is very severe in the hilly tracts of Kangra. This contribution is not even a drop in the big ocean. Whatever you contribute in this fund is too small.

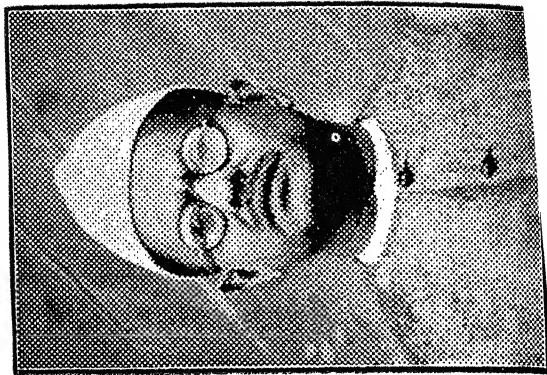


Photograph of Sh. Kasturba Gandhi taken on the occasion of her arrival at Amritsar on March 21, 1936 when she presided over the 5th session of the Punjab Achhut Uddhar Conference.

## THE TWO SONS



DEV DASS GANDHI



It should be our duty to open wells and temples for Harijans.

"I am delighted to see that the Punjab Sanatan Dharma Pritinidhi Sabha has done much in this direction. There cannot be any greater injustice than that Harijans should feel thirsty in this land of five rivers. Likewise there cannot be any greater irreligious action than that the doors of temples should be closed to Harijans. You must put an end to this.

"I have a message for Harijans. Those who drink should abstain from this pernicious habit. I have come to know that most Harijans are addicted to gambling. This bad habit should also be done away with. Our Harijan brothers should observe cleanliness, abstain from drink and gambling, remember their God and stand on their own feet.

"It is not possible that in this address I should not utter a few words to my sisters and daughters. Women can achieve greater degree of success in religious reform than men. You can teach your Harijan sisters in their homes to read and write, to sew and generally help to uplift them.

"I must conclude now. May God light such a flame in your hearts as will wholly consume untouchability!"

She gave the following message to the women of the Punjab :

"My message to the women of this land of five rivers is that if we, women take up earnestly the mission of the removal of untouchability with all its attendant evils, we can do it much easier than men alone can. So let us, women, concentrate upon fraternising with our neglected brothers and sisters."





Before leaving Amritsar for Wardha, Kasturba dined with a large number of Harijans, who had flocked from all parts of the province. As May ended, Gandhi went to Nandi Hills for a short stay with a view to recouping his health. Shrimati Kasturba, Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru and Mr. Mahadev Desai were also with him. The party visited Bangalore also—on their way back. On June 13, they returned to Madras. With a view to avoiding crowd at the Central Railway Station, the party alighted at Basin Bridge, where a large gathering of Congressmen and others was present to welcome Mr. Gandhi. He immediately motored to Mambalam and visited the Hindi Prachar building under construction after which he proceeded to Kalyan Mandapam (Choultry) in Triplicane and after a few minutes' stay they returned to Basin Bridge and boarded the Grand Trunk Express for Wardha.

The Press reporters present at the platform approached Gandhiji for interviews but he declined to be drawn into any discussion. He was closeted for some time with Mr. C. Rajagopalachari prior to his departure. The Mahatma looked much improved and told the Press representatives that he very much enjoyed the stay at Nandi Hills and Bangalore.

On January 22, 1937, Gandhiji retired from active politics, but this period of retirement was a short one.

During the years that followed, his Ashram at Sevagram occupied the place of a non-official capital of India. The Congress fought elections and got an overwhelming majority. In seven provinces, Congressmen formed the ministries. These were historic years when momentous decisions were arrived at, and Kasturba was of much help to the Mahatma who was guiding the nation.

## XIII

### RAJKOT SATYAGRAHA

*"If a country be found possessing a most fertile soil and capable of bearing every variety of production, yet notwithstanding, the people are in a state of extreme destitution and suffering, the chances are there of some fundamental error in the government of that country."*

—JOHN BRIGHT.

Early in 1939 Kasturba, despite failing health, decided to lead Rajkot Satyagraha. Before doing so she had consultations with Sardar Patel and other leaders. "Much against my own personal inclinations," said Sardar Patel in a statement, "I have to yield to Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi's insistence on going to Rajkot to join the present campaign. During the last campaign she had expressed her desire to go immediately after she heard the news of my daughter Maniben's arrest, but I succeeded in persuading her to wait. This time it is no longer possible for me to do so though I know that she is in a weak state of health. She is a resident of Rajkot and as the struggle has assumed a graver form with the determination of the State and the Agency authorities to crush the people with every means of terrorism in their power, Shrimati Kasturba cannot be persuaded to keep at home even for reasons of health. She was none too well, when she braved rigours of jail life more than once during the last civil disobedience campaign in 1930. But her indomitable spirit could stand the ordeal. She is older to-day and

physically weaker but her spirit is the same and I hope and pray that she will come out unscathed even out of the Rajkot furnace."

Accompanied by Miss Maniben Patel, Kasturba reached Rajkot at 3-40 p.m. on February 3, and both the distinguished ladies were immediately put under arrest and taken by motor car to a small village, called Sanosara. The Commissioner of State Police and the Medical Officer visited her on the 6th when also she saw her son, Devadas Gandhi. Devadas was greatly grieved to see the conditions under which his mother and Maniben were interned. They were kept within a small enclosure and the village was insanitary. Water was scarce and had to be brought from a distance, nor were vegetables and fruits obtainable there. As for medical aid there was none. After a week or so, Miss Maniben was separated from Kasturba and it is said that the former went on hunger strike as a protest against this separation. On the last day of February, Gandhiji paid his first visit to Kasturba who was then lodged at Tramba.

Gandhiji informed her that he would not leave Rajkot before his mission was fulfilled. On March 3, she received a brief note from her husband delivered by the First Member of the State. The note said: "I hope you are all calm and collected, but if you cannot remain at peace there, you can come to me."

Gandhiji announced his intention to start a fast on March 4. At this time some members of Gandhiji's party sought permission to see Kasturba, but this was at first refused on the plea that the Thakur Sahib had first to be consulted. Later, leave was given and Dr. Sushila Nayyar, Shrimati Vijayaben, Shri Naraindas Gandhi visited Kasturba on the evening of the first day

of Gandhiji's fast.

In reply to Gandhiji's note, Kasturba wrote to him, reproaching him for not consulting her before deciding to fast. The Mahatma replied back :

"You are worrying for nothing. You ought to notice that God has sent me an opportunity to do His will. How could I consult you or anybody else before undertaking the fast, when I myself was not aware that it was coming? God gave the signal and what else could I do than obey? Will there be any stopping to consult you or anybody when the final peremptory summons come as some day it must come?"

She was feeling much upset on account of Gandhiji's fast. He had sent her an oral message with a view to consoling her through Dr. Sushila enquiring if she desired to be with him during his fast. This was her reply : "No, by no means. I shall be quite content if they will let me have daily news of him. God, who has taken care of him during all his previous trials, will pull him through this too. But may not one expose oneself to risk once too often?"

When these remarks were conveyed to Gandhiji he observed : "Yes, that may happen. But a spiritual fast is justified not by its results, but by the unquestioning and joyous surrender to His will of which it is the expression. Even death should be welcome if it comes in the performance of one's highest duty."

The Mahatma enquired from the State authorities the legal position regarding Kasturba—whether she was a free person or in her case "State Guest" meant State prisoner. No reply was received but at midday on March 5, Kasturba was brought in a state car to Rashtriyaashala and left there. The First Member told

her that Thakur Sahib desired her to visit Gandhiji. On further enquiry she was informed that it was the wish of the Thakur Sahib that she should be with her husband during his fast in Rajkot.

Apparently she had been sent in response to the enquiries made by Gandhiji about her. She refused special treatment and it was decided that she should go back to Tramba the same evening. The next day, however, she along with Maniben Patel and Anusuyaben was released unconditionally. The Mahatma's fast ended on March 7.

After prolonged introspection and deep meditation Gandhiji formed the opinion that the breaking of the fast through the Viceroy's intervention was a heinous sin. The thought of being defeated upset not only Kasturba but Gandhiji's aged sister as well. Kasturba pleaded with her husband to console his sister. The late Shri Mahadev Desai gave the following account of the dialogue :

"But," said Gandhiji with a smile, "why should not you plead my case ?"

"But how can I ? I do not myself understand."

"But you must understand. You remember the time in South Africa when you were dying and the doctor said you would not live unless you took chicken broth."

"Oh yes, I remember."

"Well, if you do, don't you also remember that, though I allowed you to do as you liked, you said you would prefer to die but you could not take chicken broth ?"

"Yes."

"That was because you were firm in your faith in God. You knew that God would keep you if He so willed, but you would not care to live by breaking your

vow not to touch meat."

"Yes."

"Even so I should have fasted until the Thakur Sahib and Durbar Veerawala had to come to me relenting and saying, 'Please break your fast. We are going to fulfil our promise.' Instead I wavered. I thought I must seek the aid of the British Government, lest I should die. It was a sin. And if I got the Award by committing the sin, I must give up the fruit of sin."

"But the Thakur Sahib and Darbar Veerawala are placing obstructions in the way. If they were not doing so the award would work all right and there would be an end to all the trouble. They are so obstreperous.

"They are so because of my initial blunder. I irritated them and I have no right to expect better treatment from them. It is not they who are putting the obstacles. It is God acting through them who is putting the obstacles. It is God who has thus opened my eyes and shown me the way. And the sooner I wash my hands of the sin the better. Don't you think so?"

"Yes", she said hesitatingly. "But what of the repressive ordinances, the fines, etc. ? We have given up everything and they are still going on as usual !"

"What does that matter ? We have to do our duty, trusting them to do theirs. Why do not you see that because I failed in my duty and was impatient to reap the result of my fast or to break it soon that God has punished me thus ? But I am not defeated. Tell sister there is no defeat in the confession of one's error. The confession itself is a victory."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan* of May 27, 1939.

## XIV

### THE MARTYRDOM

*Socrates entered the prison, and took away all ignominy from the place, which could not remain a prison whilst he was there.*

—EMERSON

IN September 1939 the war was declared in Europe and India was made a belligerent country without being consulted. The years that followed are historical so far as the struggle for freedom carried on by the Indian National Congress is concerned. This was the time when in most of the provinces the Congress ministries were in the saddle. But when the situation took a sudden turn the Congress Working Committee was compelled to advise them to resign. The fall of France and the capture of Singapore and Burma created a panic in the country. Gandhiji at this time tried his level best to lessen it by his writings. Many meetings of the Congress Working Committee were held at Gandhiji's headquarters. Shrimati Kasturba also played her part by looking after the people who visited Sevagram now and then. Gandhiji for long could not carry the members of the Congress Working Committee with him, and ultimately reluctantly withdrew himself from active politics. He was absolved of the leadership of the country. At that time, the circumstances were very favourable to the British Government to come to a settlement with the Congress, but nothing was done. In April 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps came to India, but his proposals could

not meet with the approval of even the Hindu Sabha and the Muslim League, not to speak of the Congress. The situation became very tense. The leaders of public opinion realised, to their dismay, that the British Government were not willing to part with power. The Atlantic Charter aroused some hope in the minds of subject countries, but for India it ushered in only false hopes. It was a misnomer, a Dead Sea fruit. The attitude of the rulers was very clear. There seemed to be no hope of settlement with the British Government. Gandhiji had to resume the leadership of the country. He tried his utmost to make the deaf hear, but his pleadings were of no avail. The European War had put a great strain on the resources of the country. Most of the people were feeling restive. Such were the circumstances when on behalf of the Congress, Gandhiji started his 'Quit India' movement. The Congress Working Committee, having considered the pros and cons of this movement, called a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee to give its verdict, as at that time a special session of the Indian National Congress could not be held on account of various difficulties.

Shrimati Kasturba, along with Gandhiji and other members of the party, left Sevagram for Bombay in the first week of August 1942. Little did anybody know that she won't be able to return to that place. The All-India Congress Committee met for its momentous session and dispersed on the night of the 8th August after passing its now famous resolution of "Quit India". It was announced that Gandhiji would be addressing a public meeting at the Shivaji Park with a view to explaining the implications of the resolution, but in the early hours of the 9th he was



taken into custody. Shrimati Kasturba could not sit still. She immediately announced her intention to speak at the same meeting which her husband had been prevented from attending and addressing. When the local authorities came to know of this, two police officers came to the Birla House for enquiries. When she told them that she was determined to take up the thread left by her husband, she was informed that the Government had ordered her arrest. She was removed to the place which later on turned to be the Aga Khan's Palace. Gandhiji was also detained there. It was indeed an unhappy detention. Within a week the inmates of the Aga Khan Palace witnessed a tragedy which to this day has left an indelible mark on the mind of Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma lost his secretary, Shri Mahadev Desai. As usual at half-past eight on the morning of August 15th, Mr. Desai clipped his nails and got ready for the day's work after dressing his hair. For some time he was with Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and others talking, joking and laughing. All of a sudden he complained of giddiness. Medical aid was requisitioned, but it was too late. In about 20 minutes he died of heart failure, leaving behind him a huge mass of notes taken about his conversations held with Gandhiji a day or so before.

It was a great shock to Kasturba as it was to Gandhiji. Mahadev was more than a son to them. Having been associated with them since 1917, he had found a place in the innermost recesses of Gandhiji's heart; and Kasturba loved him with the affection of a real mother. After his death she felt all the more a destitute, because it was he who not only helped Gandhiji in the solution of more intricate problems of

his country and was his constant companion in his talks with the Viceroys and other statesmen, but was considered indispensable whenever Gandhiji embarked upon his fiery ordeals of fasts. And to Mata Kasturba he was a great consolation. Alas! this prop was gone for ever.

Though she had been detained along with her husband, she never took this detention cheerfully. Gandhiji's arrest had almost flabbergasted her, because he had assured her that he was not going to be arrested so soon. She had been assured that he was to offer himself for arrest only when all avenues of an honourable settlement with the government would be exhausted. The Government of India, intoxicated by victories in the war, were out to wreck any chances of a happy consummation of efforts for peace in the country. They let loose their machinery of repression. As Gandhiji has revealed in his correspondence with the Government, she felt very dejected on account of all that had happened after the morning of August 9th.

Hardly had she recovered from the shock of Mahadev's death, when she came to know of Gandhiji's impending fast in February 1943. This was not his first fast. He had undertaken so many before and she had been with him throughout all these ordeals, but now Gandhiji was completing his seventy-third year and such a grim resolve on his part was too much for her. Besides physical exertion that is caused by these fasts, this time she felt a sort of mental agony as well on account of the attitude adopted by the rulers of the country towards one who was considered a saviour and a prophet by millions of his countrymen.

When Kasturba was seriously ill, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, Mrs. Krishna Hutheesingh in an article in the *Bombay Chronicle*, giving her impressions of Gandhiji's fast, wrote : "When Bapu started his epic fast, Ba hovered around his bedside, a distracted anxious little woman, fearful of the consequences of this great purification. I was permitted to see Bapu once during these days. Never before had she looked so worn out and aged as she did then. Never had one seen her eyes so full of mute anguish and despair. Yet, in spite of it, she smiled and went about apparently calm and unruffled. Only those who knew her well guessed that her suffering must be something terrible. During all these anxious weeks of Bapu's fast, Ba never left his bedside, nursing him tirelessly. Bapu survived the ordeal. India breathed life once again. But the anxiety and mental worry of those 21 days broke Ba and ever since then she has suffered off and on. Today, this superbly brave little woman in her late sixties, is the patient around whom all the inmates of the Aga Khan's Palace keep vigil. She is dangerously ill but still kept a prisoner. There is but little hope of her surviving, but even in her weak condition, she seems to be a danger to an all-powerful Government, who will not release her. Perhaps, it is good as well that Ba is with Bapu, and he is by her side night and day, nursing her and not giving a thought to himself. Having spent 40 or more years together in the service of the motherland, it is fitting that Ba should lay down her life in this manner."

"During the fast," wrote Mr. Khooshialal Punjabi, "she kept repeating to her fellow-captives, that Gandhiji will not die during the fast, as the first call

from the Great Beyond would be positively for her. She is also said to have told some Ashramites from Sevagram who visited Gandhiji that she had a strong premonition that she would not leave the gates of the Aga Khan's Palace alive and had made a sort of a will distributing her few belongings among her friends of the Ashram."

And the premonition was too true. She could not be allowed to leave the Palace alive.

Soon after the termination of Gandhiji's fast, the Bombay Government issued a communique in March 1943, in which they announced that Shrimati Kasturba had heart attacks during the course of a week and that she had recovered from them. On December 4, the Government issued the following communique about her health: "Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi has had two heart attacks in the course of this week. She has rallied from them and is now better but she is still in a state of weakness. At her request the Government of India have agreed to her sons and grandchildren seeing her in the detention camp."

As her condition began to deteriorate, there was a universal demand for her release on the grounds of poor health. Lord Strabolgi asked the Government in the House of Lords on December 15, whether it was the intention of the Government of India to release Mrs. Gandhi from detention, to which the Earl of Munster, Under-Secretary for India, replied, "Mrs. Gandhi who has been subject to heart attacks for some time had two severe heart attacks at the end of November. Since then she has had a further slight attack but although weak is reported to be better. The Government of India some time ago

considered her release on the grounds of health. But they formed the view, to which they still hold, that it would be in Mrs. Gandhi's own interests to remain where she is with one of the most eminent heart specialists in India living on the premises and able to attend to her at any time."

Lord Strabolgi: "Do I understand from the reply that it is only a matter of Mrs. Gandhi's own well-being which actuates the Government in this, and that there has been no question of the safety of the public or the safety of the nation?"

The Earl of Munster: "I thought I had answered the question which stood on the paper referring to Mrs. Gandhi's health. I have said that they considered her release on the grounds of health that she is better where she is at the present time with a heart specialist in permanent attendance upon her."

Next day the Labour member, Mr. Sorensen asked the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery, in the Commons, "Whether he has any report on the health of Mrs. Gandhi and whether as in the case of other women detainees who have been released on the grounds of ill-health Mrs. Gandhi is likely to be released from detention?"

Mr. Amery replied:—"Mrs. Gandhi who has been subject to heart attacks for some time had two severe heart attacks at the end of November. Since then she has had one further slight attack but although weak is reported to be better. The Government of India some time ago considered her release on the grounds of health, but formed the view to which they still hold that it would be in Mrs. Gandhi's own interest to remain where she is, with one of the most eminent heart specialists in India living on the

premises and able to attend her at any time."

Mr. Sorensen:—"May I ask whether she has had the opportunity and option of leaving if she so desires?"

Mr. Amery:—"The question of leaving was considered and she has been allowed to see relatives, but following medical advice, it is considered that she is most securely situated where she is."

Mr. Sorensen:—"While appreciating thoroughly all that is being done for Mrs. Gandhi, may I take it that if medical advisers or she herself wishes that she should leave incarceration, permission will be given to her to do so.?"

Mr. Amery:—"I must leave that to the Government of India."

But her condition continued to grow from bad to worse. Just about the end of December her condition became alarming. The Government announced in a communique on the 29th that she had another severe heart attack, saying that 'her condition, having regard to her age and frailty, must continue to cause anxiety.'

From that time onward, she could not rally. Her condition went on deteriorating. Efforts were made by Gandhiji and other members of the party to get first class medical aid, but it reached too late. The full story about the negligence of the authorities is revealed in the next chapter which contains Gandhiji's letters to the Governments of Bombay and India and their replies. Gandhiji was very anxious on her score. During her last days, it is said that she expressed a desire that Shrimati Prabhavati, wife of Shri Jai Prakash Narayan, be sent for to nurse and Pandit Shiv Sharma of Lahore to treat her. The Government conceded this request after a great shilly-

shallying.

On the 20th of February, the Government communique pronounced her condition rather grave. 'The kidneys had failed to function during the last few days, due to the feeble action of the heart and this was complicated by spical pneumonia with no fever. The blood pressure had also come down to 75.52 degrees.' The doctors looked perturbed. They had given up all hope. Her mind was at peace. Next day she seemed to be quite ready to quit this mundane world. She refused to take any medicine, not even water. At night Gandhiji was sent for and he was by her bedside for most of the time. 'She remained in a semi-conscious state and could answer questions in monosyllables or by gently shaking her head.' At mid-day on February 22, she opened her mouth for a drop of the sacred Ganges water which comforted her for some time. At about 3 p.m. she sent for her youngest son, Devadas, who had reached only a day earlier. She told him that she was going, and that being Shivaratri day she pleaded, "I must go some day, why not today?" Having said this, she joined her hands together and sat up unaided. With her head bowed low she prayed for several minutes in the loudest tone she could manage: "God, my refuge, Thy mercy I crave!" In the meantime Penicillin, the wonder drug, had reached the Aga Khan Palace, as the Government had sent an SOS for it. It was too late. The doctors, therefore, did not want to try it. Moreover they thought that the final failure of the kidneys could not be relieved by its application. Gandhiji was also not favourably inclined towards its use at such a stage.

At about 5 o'clock when Devadas Gandhi was

with her, she smiled, which was a source of encouragement to him. He now thought of requesting the doctors to inject Penicillin, though they were not hopeful. When Gandhiji came to know of this, he spoke thus to Devadas : "You can't cure your mother, no matter what wonder drugs you may muster. I will yield to you if you insist. But you are hopelessly wrong. She has refused all medicines and water these two days. She is in God's hands now. You may interfere if you wish to, but I advise against the course you are adopting. And remember you are seeking to cause physical pain by an injection every four or five hours to a dying mother."

The father and the son were talking to each other when Gandhiji was sent for. He leaned her against his shoulder and tried to give her what comfort he could. She then bade good-bye to him with a single nod of her head and just before sunset at 7.35 p.m. on *Shivaratri* breathed her last. All the inmates gathered around her and chanted her favourite hymn, with tears in their eyes. *Ram Nam* and *Gita* recitations continued during the night. Gandhiji also participated in the prayers and *Bhajans*. Besides, he consoled his motherless grand-daughter, whom Kasturba had brought up. He, it is said, comforted her by telling the story of birth and life of Ba and also a few anecdotes illustrating her courage.

The Central Government was afraid of Kasturba even after the death. They did not want the body to be handed over to Gandhiji's sons or friends for cremation outside jail. As Gandhiji's view was that the dead body belonged not to him but to his sons, Mr. Devadas Gandhi wanted to take the body out of jail with a view to cremating it either in Poona or in



## GANDHI AND KASTURBA

Bombay. When the Government did not agree to it, he requested the authorities to allow Gandhiji as well as his friends and relatives to attend the cremation. The Local Government, after consulting the Central Government, acceded to Mr. Devadas Gandhi's request. Friends in Poona and Bombay were informed that they could join the funeral. About one hundred of them assembled at the Aga Khan's Palace on the morning of Wednesday including the Rt. Hon'ble S. Srinivasa Sastri, Sir R. P. Paranjpye, Mr. N. C. Kelkar, Mr. Hutheesingh, Shrimati Krishna Hutheesingh, Mr. Pranlal Devkaran Nanji, Mr. Walchand Hirachand, Lady Vithaldas Thackersey, Mr. Mathuradas Tricumji, nephew of Mahatma Gandhi, Lt.-Col. Bhandari, Inspector-General of Prisons, Lt. Col. G. M. H. Shah, Mr. S. Karandikar, Mr. D. K. Mehta.

Gandhi's grand-nephew, Mr. Shanti Kumar Morarji, Mr. Kamalnarayan Bajaj and other friends, who were present on the occasion, arranged the funeral pyre. Shri Devadas Gandhi performed the last rites of his mother.

As Kasturba's body was lifted from the bier and placed on the pyre, Mahatma Gandhi, was visibly moved and with his shawl he was seen wiping his eyes. Excepting for this moment of sentiment, Mahatma Gandhi remained cool throughout and showed no signs of emotion or excitement. All the time he was seen talking to the visitors.

After the preliminary rites of cremation had been performed and the body placed on the pyre, Mahatma Gandhi beckoned to the priest to allow him to conduct a brief service. Recitations from the Holy Koran, the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible were made and some of the members of the Ashram sang in chorus a few 'Bhajans'.

Dr. M. D. Gilder recited a passage from the Zoroastrian sacred text, while Mira Ben recited a Psalm.

The service over, Mahatma Gandhi directed the priest to continue the ceremony and himself stood leaning on his staff. Sandal-wood was piled on the body and ghee was poured. Mr. Devadas Gandhi with fire in hand went round the body three times and amidst cries of "Govinda, Govinda, Govinda", lit the funeral pyre.

In less than half an hour, fanned by an easterly breeze, the flames leaped up. Mahatma Gandhi and the congregation then withdrew a short distance and squatted under a tamarind tree watching the mortal remains of Kasturbai being consumed by fire.

## GANDHI AND KASTURBA

Gandhiji stayed on till 4.30 p.m. when the whole body was reduced to ashes. He returned to his room at about 5 p.m. and had his bath. At Pandit Malaviya's instance, the remains of Kasturba, which consisted of a handful of tiny bones, were consigned to the Ganges on the 28th of February.

In the first week of May, 1944, Gandhiji was released on grounds of health along with other members of his party. He passed some weeks at Bombay and Poona before returning to Sevagram Ashram. How lonely he would have felt on his return can be easily imagined. On October 2, a purse containing Rs. 80 lacs was presented to Gandhiji by the Trustees of the Kasturba National Memorial Fund which has been raised to perpetuate Kasturba's sacred memory.

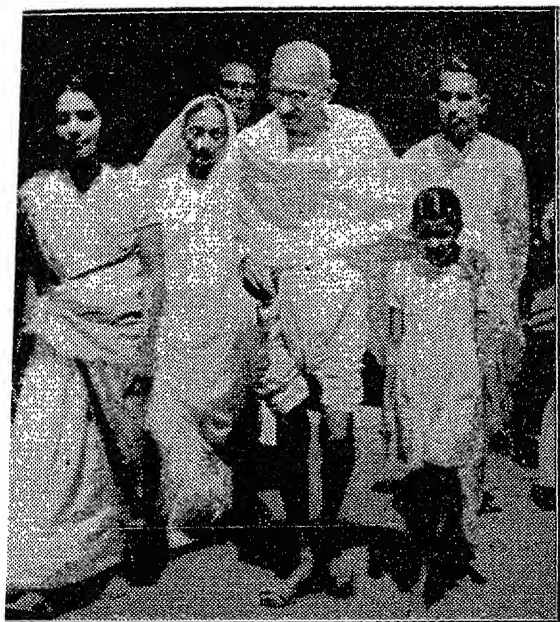
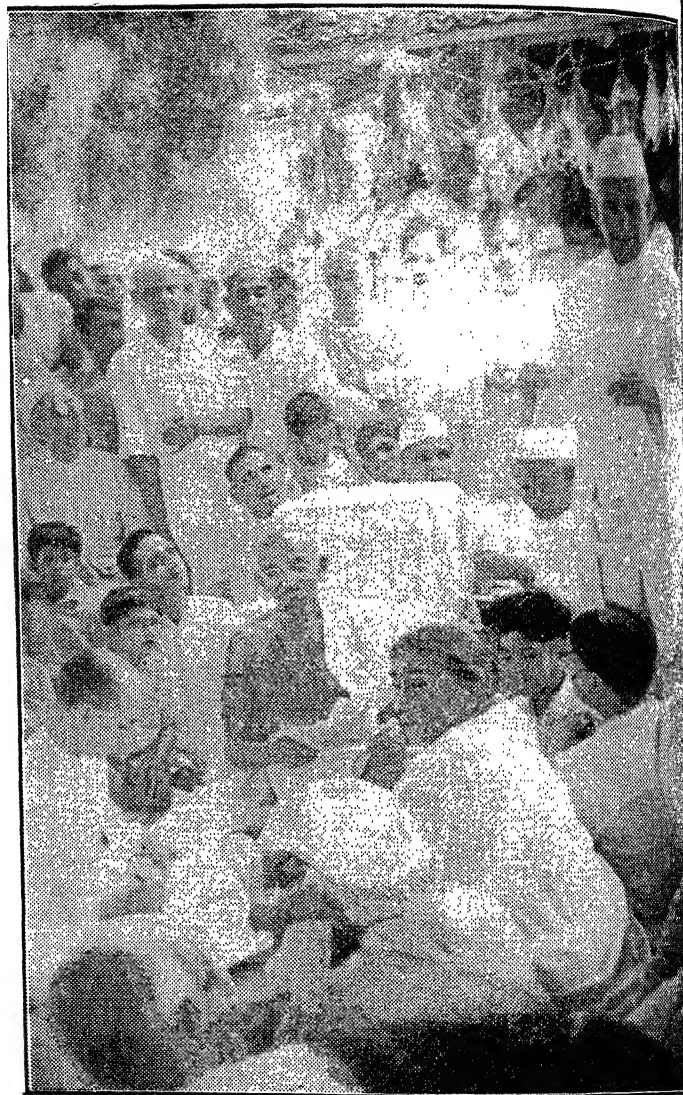


Photo shows Gandhiji leaving his hut at Sewagram on October 2 to receive the Rs. 80 lakhs purse for the Kastùrba National Memorial Fund.



Cheques and fixed deposits worth Rs. 80 lakhs were handed over to Mahatma Gandhi by Mrs. Naidu at Wardha for the Kasturba National Trust.

## XV

### REVEALING CORRESPONDENCE

*I am a true labourer, I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good.*

SHAKESPEARE

Shrimati Kasturba's death in the Aga Khan Palace was the most poignant episode during Mahatma Gandhi's detention.

Government spokesmen, to mitigate the public anxiety, shouted from house tops that "Kasturba" was receiving "all possible medical care and attention, not only from her regular attendants but from those desired by her family."

Gandhiji says that "Timely permission was not granted to enable Dr. Dinshaw Mehta and Vaidraja Pt. Shiv Sharma of Lahore to attend on Kasturba: and even when it came after eight weeks it was attended with pinpricks and ill-grace. Had there not been avoidable delay in granting my request her condition might not have reached dangerous point." He further declares that as a true Satyagrahi he refrained from making a request for Kasturba's release, but "the mere offer of release would have produced a favourable psychological effect on her mind, but unfortunately no such offer was made."

The following correspondence gives a different version and is very revealing.

**First Symptoms of Fatal Illness**

Dr. Gilder and Dr. Sushila Nayar wrote from the detention camp, Aga Khan Palace, to Col. Bhandari on March 12, 1943, as follows :—

Dear Col. Bhandari,

With reference to the talk this morning we would to bring the following like facts to your notice:—

As regards Mrs. Gandhi, she has been suffering from chronic bronchitis with dilatation of the bronchi. She has also complained latterly of pain of an anginal character and has had attacks of tachycardia with heart rate of 180 per minute.

As you must have noticed she often gets puffiness of the face and eyelids especially in the mornings. Her physical disabilities are telling upon her mental condition though Gandhiji's company mitigates that to a large extent.

In view of all this we are of the opinion that she should have a whole time nurse companion with her. A person who can speak her language and is known to her personally is likely to succeed better.

As regards Gandhiji, we are of the opinion that he will require careful nursing and looking after for another month or so. If Kanu Gandhi can be left for that period, it will be the best, as he is attached to Gandhiji and has been trained to anticipate his wants. If the Government have no objection he is ready and willing to stay as long as he is required.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) M. D. D. Gilder,

(Sd.) S. Nayar.

**Gandhiji's letter to Govt. of Bombay**

The following are extracts from a letter to the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, dated November 18, 1943:

".....It seems to me that those who are lodged with me have to suffer extra hardship by reason of their being so lodged. For, it is not only Dr. Nayar who has to suffer, others do likewise. Thus Dr. Gilder is debarred from receiving visits even from his ailing wife and daughter.

"Little Manu Gandhi can receive neither her father nor her sisters, nor can my wife receive visits from her sons or grandchildren. I discount the fact that the former could have gone out if she resented the restrictions. I know too that my son Ramdas was permitted to visit his mother when she was very ill.

"I do not understand this denial of ordinary rights of prisoners. I can understand the restrictions against me by reason of the Government's special displeasure against me. But the restrictions against others it is difficult to understand, unless it be that the Government do not trust those who are put in charge of us. On any other basis it is difficult to understand why the Superintendent of the Camp or even the Inspector-General cannot deal with the wires of the nature I have referred to and with the visitors who may be permitted to visit the co-detenus.

"I request early relief."

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.



**Gandhiji's Letter to Govt. of India**

Gandhiji wrote to the Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, New Delhi as follows :—

Detention Camp, January 27, 1944.

Sir,—Some days ago Shri Kasturba Gandhi told the Inspector-General of Prisons and Col. Shah that Dr. Dinshaw Mehta of Poona be invited to assist in her treatment. Nothing seems to have come out of her request. She had become insistent now and asked me if I had written to the Government in the matter. I, therefore, ask for immediate permission to bring in Dr. Mehta. She has also told me and my son that she would like to have some Ayurvedic physician to see her. I suggest that the I. G. P. be authorised to permit such assistance when requested.

I have no reply as yet to my request that Shri Kanu Gandhi who is being permitted to visit the patient every alternate day, be allowed to remain in the camp as a whole-time nurse. The patient shows no signs of recovery and night nursing is becoming more and more exacting. Kanu Gandhi is an ideal nurse, having nursed the patient before. And what is more, he can soothe her by giving her instrumental music and by singing "bhajans". I request early relief to relieve the existing pressure. The matter may be treated as very urgent.

The Superintendent of the camp informs me that when visitors come, one nurse only can be present. Hitherto more than one nurse has attended when necessary. The Superintendent used his discretion as to the necessity. But when difficulty arose I made a reference to the I. G. P. The result was that an

order was issued that a doctor in addition may be present. I submit that the order has been issued in ignorance or disregard of the condition of the patient. She often requires to be helped by more persons than one. Therefore I ask that there should be no restriction as to the number of the attendants.

It would be wrong on my part if I suppressed the fact that in the facilities being allowed to the patient grace had been sadly lacking. The order about the attendants is the most glaring instance of pin-pricks, besides being in defeat of the purpose for which attendance during visits of relatives is allowed.

Again, my three sons are in Poona. The eldest, Hiralal, who is almost lost to us, was not allowed yesterday, the reason being that the I.G.P. had no instructions to allow him to come again. And yet the patient was naturally anxious to meet him.

To cite one more pin-prick, every time visitors who are on the permitted list come, they have to apply to Government Office, Bombay, for permission. The consequence is that there is unnecessary delay and heart-burning. The difficulty, I imagine, arises because neither the Superintendent nor the I.G.P. has any function except that of passing on my requests to Bombay.

I am aware that Shri Kasturba is a Government patient, and that even as her husband I should have no say about her. But as the Government have been pleased to say that instead of being discharged she is being kept with me in her own interest, perhaps in interpreting her wishes and feelings I am doing what the Government would desire and appreciate. Her recovery, or at least mental peace when she is lingering, is common cause between the Government and

me. Any jar tells on her.

I am, etc.  
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

**Covering Letter to Bombay Government**

January 27, 1944.

The Secretary to the Government of Bombay (H.D.)  
Bombay.

Sir,—I enclose herewith for dispatch a letter addressed to the Government of India, but it need not be dispatched if the Government of Bombay can "suo moto" deal with the matters referred to therein. As the object is to obtain relief as promptly as possible, instructions from the Central Government, if necessary, may be obtained on the 'phone.

I am, etc.,  
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

**Gandhiji's Reminder**

Detention Camp, January 31, 1944.

Sir,—I sent on 27th instant a very urgent letter addressed to the Government of India. I am still without a reply. The patient is no better. The attendants are about to break down. Four only can work—two only at a time on alternate nights. All the four have to work during the day. The patient herself is getting restive and inquires, "when will Dr. Dinshaw come." May I know as early as may be, even tomorrow if possible:

(1) Whether Shri Kanu Gandhi can come as full-time nurse.

(2) Whether Dr. Dinshaw's services may be enlisted for the present and

(3) Whether the restriction on the number of attendants during visits can be removed.

I hope it may not have to be said that the relief came too late.

I am etc.,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

(Communication from Government conveyed by the Superintendent of the camp on 31-1-44 at 4 p.m.)

"Government wants to know whether Mrs. Gandhi has any particular physician in mind and whether she would want one in addition to Dr. Dinshaw Mehta."

Gandhiji scribbled out a reply to the above and handed immediately to the Superintendent of the camp—it being Monday, the day of silence.

"She has no particular Ayurvedic physician in mind, but my son Devdas suggested the name of Vaidyaraja Sharma of Lahore. Any physician who is admitted will be in addition to Dr. Dinshaw and that too if and when the latter has failed to give satisfaction. She has often expressed a desire to be seen by an Ayurvedic physician. If the permission is granted, it should be of a general character. She is losing will power and I have to judge between a multiplicity of advice so long as I am permitted to have responsibility for her peace of mind, which is above all that is possible at this stage."

### **"Ba" Gradually Losing Ground**

Detention Camp, 31st Jan. 1944.

Dear Col. Bhandari,—As you know Smt. Kasturba Gandhi has been gradually losing ground. Last night she had very little sleep, and this morning she had a bad collapse. She became very short of breath (resp.

48), the pulse was very feeble in volume and tension and 100 to the minute and her colour was ashy grey. She recovered after about twenty minutes' treatment. Now at midday she is restless, complains of pain in the left chest and back, is cyanotic and dyspnoeic. The pulse rate is 108, the B. P. is 90-50, resp. 40.

Under these circumstances we would like to have the help in consultation of Dr. Jivraj Mehta (Yeravada Central Prison) and Dr. B. C. Roy (Calcutta) who have seen her in her former illness and in whom she has faith. We might state that the patient's condition is such that if the help of these doctors is to be of any use it should not be delayed.

We might also point out that as she has to be watched all night and day, nursing has become difficult and the patient herself has been constantly asking for Kanu Gandhi and Dr. Dinshaw Mehta.

Yours sincerely,  
(Sd.) S. Nayar,  
M. D. D. Gilder.

P. S.—Gandhiji's blood pressure this morning was 206-110.

### **Life Hanging in the Balance**

Detention Camp, Feb. 3, 1944.

Sir,

Shri Kasturba asked me yesterday when Dr. Dinshaw was coming, and whether a Vaidya (Ayurvedic physician) could see her and give her some drugs. I told her I was trying for both but that we were prisoners and could not have things as we liked.

She has since been repeatedly asking me whether I could not do something to hasten matters. She

had a restless night again. This is of course nothing new for her at present.

I request immediate orders about Dr. Dinshaw and Vaidyaraja Sharma of Lahore. The latter will take some time in coming. But Dr. Dinshaw can come even today, if authority is given for calling him in.

I must confess that I do not understand this delay when a patient's life is hanging in the balance and may be saved by timely aid. After all for a patient alleviation of pain is as important as the highest matters of State.

I am etc.,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

To—Secretary to the Government of Bombay,  
Bombay.

### **Government "Concession"**

No. S. D. VI-2035, Home Department (Political),  
Bombay, 3rd Feb. 1944.

From:—The Secretary to the Government of  
Bombay, Home Department.

To:—M. K. Gandhi, Esquire.

Sir,—I am directed to refer to your letter of the 31st January and to reply as follows to the three points raised by you.

(1) Government have agreed to Kanu Gandhi staying in for the purpose of helping in nursing Mrs. Gandhi on condition that he agrees to be bound by the same regulations as other security prisoners in the detention camp. Government consider that with Kanu Gandhi staying in the nursing assistance provided should be adequate and they cannot agree to any requests for further assistance.

(2) Government have decided that no outside doctors should be allowed unless the Government Medical Officer considers that it is absolutely necessary for medical reasons. The question whether Dr. Dinshaw Mehta should be called in is accordingly for the Government Medical Officer to decide on medical grounds.

(3) Interviews with near relatives have been sanctioned for Mrs. Gandhi. While Government have no objection to your being present during those interviews they consider that other inmates of the detention camp should not be present except to the extent demanded by the condition of Mrs. Gandhi's health.

It is understood that the Inspector-General of Prisons has agreed that one attendant may stay throughout the interviews and that a doctor may come in if necessary. Government considers that normally this should be adequate but the matter is one to be decided solely on medical grounds by the Inspector-General of Prisons.

Yours obedient servant,  
(Sd.) H. Iyengar,

Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Home Department.

### **Responsibility for Bringing in Non-Allopaths**

**"IMMEDIATE"**

Detention Camp, 11-2-44.

The responsibility for bringing in a non-allopath assistant would be wholly mine and the Government shall stand absolved from responsibility for any

untoward result following such treatment. I am not sure that I shall accept the advice that such Vaidyas or Hakims may give. But if I do and if the prescription is ineffective, I would like to reserve the right to revert to present treatment.

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

### **Gandhiji Complains About Vexations and Delay**

Detention Camp, February 14, 1944.

Sir,—I told you yesterday that Shri Kasturba was so bad during the night that Dr. Nayar got frightened and awakened Dr. Gilder. I felt that she was going. The doctors were naturally helpless.

Dr. Nayar had therefore to wake up the Superintendent who kindly phoned the Vaidyaraja. It was then about 1 A.M. Had he been on the premises he would certainly have given relief. I therefore asked you to let him stay at the camp during the night. But you informed me the Government orders did not cover night stay. The Vaidya however, you said, could be called in during the night.

I pointed out the obvious danger of delay but you were sorry the orders would not allow you to go further. In vain I argued that the Government having given the authority to call in Vaidyaraja on condition that I absolved them from responsibility for any untoward result of the "vaidic" treatment, they could not contemplate any restriction on the duration of the physician's stay at the camp so long as it was thought necessary in the interests of the patient. In view of your rejection of my request, I had to trouble the Vaidyaraja to rest in his car in front of the gate so that in case of need he might be called in. He very



humanely consented. He had to be called in and he was able to bring the desired relief.

The crisis has not passed as yet. I, therefore, repeat my request and ask for immediate relief. I would like, if I can, to avoid last night's experience.

I do wish that the vexations caused by the delay in granting my requests about the patient's treatment came to an end. Both Dr. Mehta and the Vaidyaraja were permitted to come in after protracted delay. Precious time was lost making recovery more uncertain than it was.

I hope you will be able to secure the necessary authority for the Vaid's stay in the camp during night, if the patient's condition required it. The patient needs constant and continuous attention.

Yours etc.,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

To The Inspector-General of Prisons, Poona.

### **The Last Appeal**

Detention Camp, February 16, 1944.

Sir,—This is in continuation of my letter of the 14th instant.

When I asked for Vaidyaraja and took upon myself the responsibility of changing Shri Kasurba's treatment and absolved the Government physician of all responsibility, I naturally took for granted that the Vaidyaraj would be allowed such facilities as would, in his opinion, be necessary for carrying out his treatment. The patient's night's are much worse than her days and it is essentially at night that constant attendance is necessary. The Vaidyaraja considers himself handicapped in his treatment of the case under the present arrangements.

In order to be within immediate call, he has been good enough to sleep in his car outside the gate of this camp for the last three nights and every night he has had to be called in at least once. This is an unnatural state of things and though he seems to have infinite capacity for suffering inconvenience for the sake of the patient, I may not take undue advantage of his generous nature.

Besides, it means disturbing the Superintendent and his staff (in fact the whole camp) once or more often during the night. For instance, last night she suddenly developed fever with rigor. The Vaidyaraja who had left the premises at 10-30 p.m. had to be called in at 12 midnight. I had to request him to leave soon afterwards although he would have liked to have stayed with her longer, because so long as he stayed in, it would have meant keeping the Superintendent and his staff awake which might have been even for the whole night. I would not do this even for saving my lifelong partner, especially when I know that a human way is open.

As I have said already the Vaidyaraja considers it necessary to be in constant attendance on the patient. He varies the drugs from moment to moment as the patient's condition requires. Drs. Gilder's and Nayar's assistance is at my disposal all the time—they are more than friends and would do everything in their power for the patient. But, as I have said in my last letter, they cannot help while treatment of a wholly different nature from theirs is going on. Besides being in its very nature impracticable, such a course would be unjust to the patient, to the Vaidyaraja and to themselves.

I therefore submit below the following three

alternative proposals :

(1) Vaidyaraja should be permitted to remain in the camp day and night so long as he considers it necessary in the interests of the patient.

(2) If the Government cannot agree to this, they may release the patient on parole to enable her to receive the full benefit of the physician's treatment.

(3) If neither of these two proposals are acceptable to the Government, I request that I be relieved of the responsibility of looking after the patient. If I as her husband cannot procure for her the help that she wants or that I think necessary, I ask for my removal to any other place of detention that the Government may choose. I must not be made a helpless witness of agonies the patient is passing through.

The Government have kindly permitted Dr. Mehta to visit the patient at her repeated requests. His help is valuable, but he does not prescribe drugs. She needs the physical therapy given by him which soothes her greatly but she cannot do without drug treatment either. Drugs can only be prescribed by the doctors or the Vaidyaraja. The doctor's treatment has already been suspended.

In the absence of a satisfactory reply to this letter by this evening, I shall be constrained to suspend Vaidyaraja's treatment also. If she cannot have the drug treatment which she should in full, I would rather that she did without it altogether.

I am writing this by the patient's bedside at 2 a.m. She is oscillating between life and death. Needless to say she knows nothing of this letter. She is now hardly able to judge for herself.

I am etc.,  
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

**The Danger Point That Could Have Been Avoided**

To the Inspector-General of Prisons, Poona,  
Feb. 18, 1944.

Sir,—Vaidyaraja Shri Shiv Sharma regrettably informs me that having put forth all the resources at his disposal he has been unable to produce a condition in Shri Kasturba so as to give him hope of final recovery.

As his was simply a trial to see whether Ayurvedic treatment could yield better result, I have now asked Drs. Gilder and Nayar to resume the suspended treatment. Dr. Mehta's assistance was never suspended and will be continued till recovery or the end.

I want to say that the Vaidyaraja has been most assiduous and attentive in the handling of this most difficult case, and I would have willingly allowed him to continue his treatment if he had wished to do so. But he would not do it, when his last prescription failed, to bring about the result he had expected.

Drs. Gilder and Nayar tell me that they would like to receive the benefit of the Vaidyaraja's assistance in the matter of sedatives, purgatives and the like. These have proved effective both from the doctors' and the patient's point of view, I hope that the Government will have no objection to the Vaidyaraja continuing to come in for the purpose. Needless to say, under the altered circumstances, he will not be required for night duty.

I cannot refrain from regrettably saying that had there not been the wholly avoidable delay in granting my request for allowing the services of the Vaidyaraja and Dr. Mehta, the patient's condition might not have been so near the danger point as it is today. I am well

aware that nothing happens outside the divine will, but man has no other means of interpreting that will apart from the results he can see.

I am etc.,  
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

### **Gandhiji's Directions for Funeral Rites**

The following is Gandhiji's reply taken down by the Inspector-General of Prisons in writing from dictation at 8-7 p.m. on February 22, 1944 in answer to his inquiry on behalf of the Government as to what Gandhiji's wishes in the matter of Shri Kasturba's funeral rites were :

(1) "Body should be handed over to my sons and relatives which would mean a public funeral without interference from Government.

(2) "If that is not possible, funeral should take place as in the case of Mahadev Desai and if the Government will allow relatives only to be present at the funeral, I shall not be able to accept the privilege unless all friends who are as good as relatives to me are also allowed to be present.

(3) "If this also is not acceptable to the Government then those who have been allowed to visit her will be sent away by me and only those who are in the camp (detenus) will attend funeral.

"It has been, as you will be able to bear witness, my great anxiety not to make any political capital out of this most trying illness of my life companion. But I have always wanted whatever the Government did to be done with good grace, which I am afraid, has been hitherto lacking. It is not too much to expect that now that the patient is no more whatever the

Government decide about the funeral will be done with good grace."

### Butler's Twists

### GANDHIJI'S CALL FOR AMENDS

Detention Camp, 4-3-44.

Sir,—It is not without regret and hesitation that I write about my dead wife. But truth demands this letter.

According to the newspapers Mr. Butler is reported to have said in the House of Commons on March 2, 1944,....."She was receiving all possible medical care and attention, not only from her regular attendants but from those desired by her family...."

Whilst I gratefully acknowledge that the regular attendants did all they could the help that was asked for by the deceased or by me on her behalf, when at all given, was given after a long wait and the Ayurvedic physician was permitted to attend only after I had to tell the prison authorities that if I could not procure for the patient the help that she wanted or I thought necessary I should be separated from her. I ought not to be made a helpless witness of the agonies she was passing through. And even then I could make full use of the Vaidyaraja's services only after I wrote a letter to the Inspector-General of Prisons of which a copy is hereto attached.

My application for Dr. Dinshaw was made in writing on 27th January, 1944. The deceased herself had repeatedly asked the Inspector-General of Prisons for Dr. Dinshaw Mehta's help during practically a month previous to that. He was allowed to come only from 5-2-1944. Again the regular physicians

Drs. Nayar and Gilder made a written application for consultation with Dr. B. C. Roy of Calcutta on the 31st January, 1944. The Government simply ignored their written request and subsequent oral reminders.

Mr. Butler is further reported to have said, "No request for her release was received and the Government of India believe it would be no act of kindness to her or her family to remove her from the Aga Khan's Palace.

Whilst it is true that no request for her release was made by her or by me (as Satyagrahi prisoners it would have been unbecoming) would it not have been in the fitness of things if the Government had at least offered to her, me, and her sons to release her? The mere offer of release would have produced a favourable psychological effect on her mind. But unfortunately no such offer was ever made.

As to the funeral rites, Mr. Butler is reported to have said, "I have information that the funeral rites took place at the request of Mr. Gandhi in the grounds of the Aga Khan's Palace at Poona and friends and relatives were present."

The following, however, was my actual request which the Inspector-General of Prisons took down in writing from dictation at 8-7 p.m. on 22-2-1944:

"(I) Body should be handed over to my sons and relatives which would mean a public funeral without interference from Government.

("II) If that is not possible, funeral should take place as in the case of Mahadev Desai and if the Government will allow relatives only to be present at the funeral, I shall not be able to accept the privilege unless all friends who are as good as relatives to me

are also allowed to be present.

"(III) If this also is not acceptable to the Government, then those who have been allowed to visit her will be sent away by me and only those who are in the camp (detenus) will attend the funeral.

"It has been as you will perhaps be able to bear witness, my great anxiety not to make any political capital out of this most trying illness of my life companion. But I have always wanted whatever the Government did to be done with good grace which I am afraid, has been hitherto lacking. It is not too much to expect that now that the patient is no more whatever the Government decide about the funeral will be done with good grace."

Government will perhaps admit that I have scrupulously avoided making any political capital out of my wife's protracted illness and the difficulties I experienced from the Government. Nor do I want to make any now. But in justice to her memory, to me and for the sake of truth I ask the Government to make such amends as they can.

If the newspaper report is inaccurate in essential particulars or the Government have a different interpretation of the whole episode, I should be supplied with the correct version and the Government interpretation of the whole episode. If my complaint is held to be just, I trust that the amazing statement said to have been made in America by the Agent of the Government of India in U.S.A., will be duly corrected.

I am, etc.,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

Additional Secretary to the Government of India,  
New Delhi.



**Government's Defence**

No. III/43 M.S. Government of India, Home Department.

From:—The Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, New Delhi.

To:—M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

New Delhi, the 21st March, 1944.

Sir,—In reply to your letter of 4th March regarding Mr. Butler's reply to a question in the House of Commons on the 2nd March, 1944, I am directed to say that the Government of India regret that you should feel that they were unreasonable or obstructive about the calling in of special medical attendants.

The Government of India were always ready to allow any extra medical aid or consultation which the Government doctors considered necessary, and they do not think that there was any delay in summoning outside aid when the Government doctors decided that it was needed. It was on January 28th that they were first informed that Mrs. Gandhi had asked for the services of Dr. Dinshaw Mehta and it was not until January 31st that they were told that Dr. Gilder had asked for consultation with certain other doctors. On February 1st the Bombay Government were explicitly informed that any extra medical aid or consultation might be allowed which the Government doctors considered necessary or useful. If Dr. Dinshaw Mehta was not called in earlier, it was due to the view originally expressed by both Col. Bhandari and Dr. Gilder that his services could not be of any use, but he was summoned as soon as the Government doctors revised that opinion.

Your letter of January 27, which did not reach the

Government of India until February 1, made some reference to your wife's wish to see an Ayurvedic physician, but no name was mentioned and it was not until February 9 that a definite request for the services of Vaidyaraja Sharma was received. The request was then granted within 24 hours and as soon as the Government of India were made aware of the difficulties resulting from his not being accommodated inside the Palace, the necessary permission was given for him to reside there. In the circumstances the Government of India feel that they did everything possible to ensure that your wife received all the treatment that you wished during her illness.

2. As to the question of release the Government of India still feel that the course they adopted was the best and kindest. It was reported to them on January 24, that your son, Devadas Gandhi, had asked his mother whether she would like to be released on parole and she had replied that she would not like to leave the Palace without her husband. Government have made no use of this report, since it was the record of a private conversation; but it confirmed them in the view expressed above. The misunderstanding about the statement in America quite wrongly attributed to Sir Girjashanker Bajpai has been cleared up by answers to questions in the Legislative Assembly which you have doubtless seen.

3. The arrangements for the funeral were understood here to be in accordance with your wishes. The Government made enquiries on the point and were informed that you had no special preference between the first two alternatives mentioned in your letter.

4. In these circumstances, the Government of

India do not think that Mr. Butler's reply to the Parliamentary question was incorrect in substance.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Sd.) R. Tottenham.

### Gandhiji's Rejoinder

Detention Camp, April 1, 1944.

Sir,—I beg to acknowledge your letter of 21st March handed to me on the 27th.

As to extra medical aid I wish to state that the first request for the services of Dr. Dinshaw Mehta was made by the deceased verbally to Col. Advani sometime in December last. When repeated verbal requests met with little or no response I had to make a written request addressed to the Government of India dated 27-1-44.

On the 31st of January, I sent a reminder to the Government of Bombay and so did Drs. Nayar and Gilder in a letter addressed to the Inspector-General of Prisons. I wrote again on the 3rd of February to the Government of Bombay who sent a reply which resulted in Dr. Dinshaw being brought in on the 5th of February last, *i.e.* after an interval of over six weeks from the date of the first request. And even when permission was granted, restrictions were placed upon the number of his visits and the time he was to take in administering treatment. It was not without difficulty that these restrictions were later relaxed and then removed.

As to the reference in the letter under reply to Dr. Gilder, I showed it to him. The result was the

attached letter addressed by him to the Government which he has asked me to forward. While it shows that Dr. Gilder never expressed the opinion attributed to him, it does not alter the tragic fact that Dr. Dinshaw's services were held up for over six weeks.

The question of calling in a non-allopath was definitely and formally raised before the Inspector-General of Prisons by my son after his visit to this camp early in December last. On Col. Bhandari mentioning to me my son's request to him I told him that if my son thought that non-allopathic treatment should be tried, the Government should permit it. While the consideration of my son's request was on the anvil, the patient's condition began to worsen and she herself pressed for the services of an Ayurvedic physician. She spoke to both the Inspector-General of Prisons and Col. Shah several times, again with no result.

In despair I wrote to the Government of India on 27-1-44. On the 31st of January, the Superintendent of this camp enquired on behalf of the Government, among other things, whether the deceased had any particular Ayurvedic physician in mind to which I replied in writing, it being my silence day.

As no relief was forthcoming as a result and the patient's condition admitted of no delay, I sent an urgent letter to the Government of Bombay on the 3rd of February. It was on the 11th of February that a local Vaidya was sent and on the 12th that Vaidyaraja Sharma was brought in.

Thus there was an interval of more than eight weeks between the first request for non-allopathic aid and of actual bringing in of that aid.

Before Vaidyaraja Sharma came I had been asked to

give a written undertaking (which I gladly did) that absolved the Government of all responsibility about the result of his treatment. The Vaidyaraja was thus in sole charge of the case for the time being. One would have thought that a physician in sole charge of a patient would have all such facilities of visiting and watching the patient as he considered necessary. And yet there was no end to the difficulties in getting these facilities for him. These have been alluded to in the enclosure to my letter of 4-3-44.

All this time the patient was passing through great suffering, and her condition was deteriorating so rapidly that every delay weighed against chances of her recovery.

Whether the delays and difficulties experienced by the patient and me were caused by one department of the Government or another, or even by the Government doctors, the responsibility surely rests with the Central Government.

I note that the Government have maintained complete silence over the written request (which was reinforced by subsequent verbal reminders) of Drs. Nayar and Gilder to call Dr. B. C. Roy in consultation, and have not even condescended to give their reasons for not granting the request.

Similarly the letter under reply is silent about the discrepancy pointed out by me in my letter dated 20-3-44, in the Hon. the Home Member's statement in the Assembly that trained nurses were in attendance. The fact is that they never were. Let me add here that nurses of the deceased's choice who were permitted were brought after considerable delay especially Shri Kanu Gandhi.

I hope, after a calm perusal of this bare recital

of facts and of the relevant copies of correspondence attached hereto, it will be conceded that the claim of the Government of India that "they did everything possible," to ensure that the deceased received all the treatment that I 'wished' during her illness is not justified. Much less can Mr. Butler's claim be justified. For he went further when he said, "She was receiving all possible medical care and attention, not only from her regular attendants but from those desired by her family." Does not the statement of the Government of Bombay, "Government have decided that no outside doctors should be allowed unless the Government medical officer considers that it is absolutely necessary for medical reasons" contradict the above claims?

On the question of release, and the report received by the Government of India of a "private conversation" my son had with his mother in this connection, a prisoner can have no "private" conversation with anybody from outside. Therefore, so far as I am concerned, the Government are free to make use of the conversation after verification (usual and obligatory in such cases) by my son. In any case, the Government would have been absolved from all blame if they had made in offer of release and laid on me the burden of deciding what was "best and kindest" for her.

As to the arrangements for the funeral my letter to the Government dated 4-3-44 embodying my actual request, which the Inspector-General of Prisons took down in writing from dictation, speaks for itself. It, therefore, astonishes me that on "enquiries" made by the Government they were "informed" that I had 'no special preference between the first two alternatives' mentioned in my letter. The information given to the Government is wholly wrong.

It is inconceivable that given the freedom of choice I could ever be reconciled to the cremation of a dear one being performed in a jail compound, (which this camp is today) instead of the consecrated cremation ground.

It is not pleasant or easy for me to write about such personal matters to the Government. But I do so in this case for the sake of the memory of one who was my faithful partner for over sixty-two years. I leave it to the Government to consider what could be the fate of other prisoners not so circumstanced as Shri Kasturba was.

I am yours etc.,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

The Additional Secretary to the Government of India, (Home Department), New Delhi.

#### **Dr. Gilder Corrects Inaccuracies**

The following is the letter of Dr. Gilder to the Government of India, referred to by Gandhiji above:—

Sir,—Your letter of the 21st March to Mahatma Gandhi contains the statement :

"It was on January 28th that they were first informed that Mrs. Gandhi had asked for the services of Dr. Dinshaw Mehta...If Dr. Dinshaw was not called in earlier, it was due to the view originally expressed by both Col. Bhandari and Dr. Gilder that his services would not be of any use, but he was summoned as soon as the Government doctors revised that opinion."

Surely, coupling of my name with that of Col. Bhandari is a mistake. The Government doctors in attendance were Col. Bhandari and Col. Shah. As far as I am concerned, sometime in December last, at one

of Col. Advani's evening visits (when he was officiating for Col. Bhandari) Smt. Kasturba Gandhi asked him to allow Dr. Dinshaw Mehta to come in and Col. Advani was good enough to ask my opinion on the advisability of Dr. Dinshaw's coming. As I had not talked over the matter with my colleague Dr. Sushila Nayar, nor with the patient or her husband, I told Col. Advani, I would give him a reply later. At his visit the next morning, I told him my considered opinion that Dr. Dinshaw's presence would be a great help.

When the whole of January had passed and permission for Dr. Dinshaw had not come, Dr. Nayar and myself sent a gentle reminder in our letter of 31st January.

I might state that though in that letter we had asked for a consultation with Dr. B. C. Roy, no notice seems to have been taken of it or of verbal reminders.

You will permit me to draw your attention to another inaccuracy, viz. about the employment of trained nurses. No trained nurse ever came inside the camp. Before the arrival of Smt. Jaiprakash Narayan and Shri Kanu Gandhi when nursing was becoming difficult, we were given the services of a woman who had acted as a "badli ayah" at the mental hospital. She struck work inside of a week and asked the Superintendent for her discharge.

I have etc.,

(Sd.) M. D. D. Gilder.

**Will Col. Bhandari Enlighten ?**

### GANDHIJI'S LETTER

Detention Camp, April 2, 1944.

Dear Col. Bhandari:—In the Government of



India's letter to me dated March 31, 1944, there occur these two passages:—

"It was on January 28 that they were first informed that Mrs. Gandhi had asked for the services of Dr. Dinshaw Mehta...If Dr. Dinshaw Mehta was not called in earlier, it was due to the view originally expressed by both Col. Bhandari and Dr. Gilder that his services would not be of any use but he was summoned as soon as the Government doctors revised that opinion."

"The arrangements for the funeral were understood here to be in accordance with your wishes. The Government made enquiries on the point and were informed that you had no special preference between the first two alternatives mentioned in your letter."

Dr. Gilder has no recollection of his having given the opinion attributed to him. I have never expressed indifference as to whether the deceased was cremated in the consecrated public cremation ground or in the jail compound which this camp is. Can you please throw light on the discrepancies?

Yours etc.,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

### **Startling Statement in Council of State**

Detention Camp, April 2, 1944.

Sir,—This is in continuation of my letter of yesterday's date to the Government of India. For, after handing the letter to the Superintendent of the camp on looking at the papers, I came upon the following startling statement in the "Hindustan Times" of 30-3-1944:—

"New Delhi, Wednesday.—To-day in the Council of State, Lala Ramsarandas asked whether and when Mahatma Gandhi had asked Government to permit the eminent Ayurvedic physician, Pandit Shiv Sharma to take up the treatment of Mrs. Gandhi.

The Home Secretary, Mr. Conran Smith, replying said the first definite request for Pandit Sharma's services was made to the Government of India on February 9 and was granted on February 10. He understood that Pandit Sharma paid his first visit a day or two later."

The fact is that Vaidyaraja Shiv Sharma's name was first submitted to the Government on 31st January, 1944 and not on the 9th February. But my letter of yesterday will show further that the first request for a non-allopathic physician was made early in December, 1943. May I look for correction of the statement referred to?

I am yours etc.,  
(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

The Additional Secretary to the Government of India, New Delhi.

#### **Government Stick to their Version**

From,—The Additional Secretary to the Government of India, New Delhi, the 30th March 1944.

To:—M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

Sir,—In reply to your letter of March 20, I am directed to say that the Government of India were informed on December 22 that a request has been made for the services of Kanu Gandhi and the wife of Mr. Jai Prakash Narayn. A telegram was sent the same day to the Government of Bihar, in whose cus-

tody the latter was, asking whether arrangements could be made for her transfer to Poona. The Bombay Government were meanwhile informed on December 23 that, if extra nursing was necessary, the correct course would be to provide professional nurses for that purpose. On December 24, the Government of India heard from the Government of Bihar that they had no objection to the transfer of Mrs. Jai Prakash Narayn and the Bombay Government were informed on the same day that they might take up the matter with the Government of Bihar if satisfactory arrangements could not be made to supply professional nurses as previously suggested. On January 3 the Government of India were informed that professional nurses employed for Mrs. Gandhi had left and that arrangements were being made for the transfer of Mrs. Jai Prakash Narayn. Thereafter it was learnt that Kanu Gandhi had been paying visits to the Aga Khan's Palace and on January 27 the Government of India received renewed request that he might be allowed to stay in the Palace to help in nursing your wife. This permission was granted on January 29, though it appears that even before the receipt of this letter, the Bombay Government had permitted his staying in the Palace.

In these circumstances, the Government of India consider that the reply given in the Legislative Assembly, to which you refer, was substantially correct. They have now been informed by the Bombay Government of the fact, of which they had no previous knowledge either from the Government's letters or from yours, that it was your wife who said that she preferred an 'Ayah' to a trained nurse and that her wishes in this respect were complied with.

They consider it hardly necessary to publish this fact.  
(Sd.) R. Tottenham.

### Need Of Public Adjustment

Detention Camp, April 13, 1944.

Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 30th March received by me on the 6th of April. It is good proof to show how ill-informed the Central Government were about the whole situation.

As to "trained nurses", I drew attention to the statement made on behalf of the Government that they "were made available for a short period." That my wife preferred an 'Ayah' to a trained nurse is hardly relevant to the consideration whether trained nurses were in fact supplied. Therefore that statement seems to me clearly to demand public adjustment.

I hope to have satisfactory reply regarding other matters contained in my letter of April 1, 1944.

I am etc.,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi.

Additional Secretary to the Government of India,  
New Delhi.

### The Last Word

From:—Sir Richard Tottenham, C.S.I., C.I.E., I.C.S.,  
Addl. Secretary to the Government of India,

To:—M. K. Gandhi, Esq.,

Sir,—The Government of India have read with regret your letters of April 1, 2 and 13. They believe that no impartial judgment would support the complaints you have made against them. At the same

time, they feel that it is impossible to expect from you in your bereavement a fair recognition of their endeavours to do all that was reasonably possible to meet the requests that reached them, and that no useful purpose would be served by continuing the correspondence.

(Sd.) R. Tottenham.















